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With Nijuku and Sanju in tow, the road winds on for Kuro and Sen. During a lull en route, Kuro takes a turn down memory lane, revisiting an unfortunate incident during her early days as a traveler that resulted in her imprisonment! One by one, the secrets surrounding Kuro and her journey with Sen are disclosed . . . and the fate that Kuro will suffer should her quest fail is finally revealed!

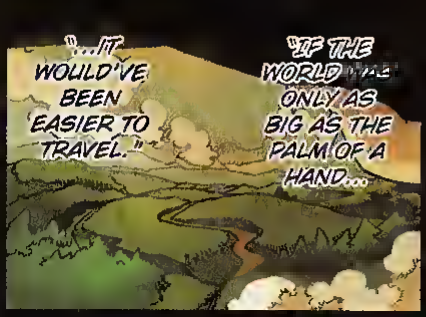
Shoulder-a-Coffin
KURO
2
SATOKO KIYUDUKI

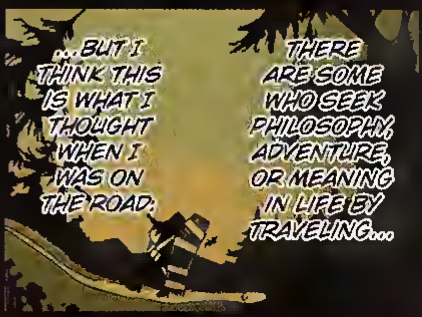
"Wow. The 'outside world' is amazing."

The sight was the grandest thing the children had witnessed on their journey so far.

Girl
Ghost girl's lover's servant
Traveler
Kei's wanderer
Characters
Shoulder's Collar Kuro
Sen
albar
Sanjyo child
Kitto
traveler
Nijuku a child

I KEEP WALKING AND WALKING.
I KEEP WALKING THE EN[illegible] STRAIGHT.


"...IT WOULD'VE BEEN EASIER TO TRAVEL."
"IF THE WORLD WAS ONLY AS BIG AS THE PALM OF A HAND..."


...BUT I THINK THIS IS WHAT I THOUGHT WHEN I WAS ON THE ROAD.
THERE ARE SOME WHO SEEK PHILOSOPHY, ADVENTURE, OR MEANING IN LIFE BY TRAVELING...

SHOULDER-[illegible] COFFIN
KURO

Kuro! The girls! Wings!! They have wings!!
You're awfully rowdy. What's wrong?
Morn-ing!
Morning, Sen.
Brr. Mornings in the mountains are freezing.
Hey... Huh?
Why are you so calm!?
Oh, you're right.
"Wings"?
Different?
You girls look different today.
...They were able to turn into mice.
Huh? Oh yeah, that's right.
When I first met them...
...ears...
Oh, I know. You guys are missing your cat...
That's the story of the cat who wore boots.
And then they were eaten by a cat, right?
Besides you weren't there that time
That's why they look like that!
Summer!
Summer
?
What the?
What the heck are those!?

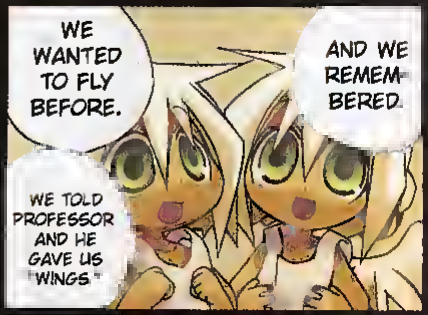
FLY! FLY!
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
TMP

UM, WE WERE LOOKING AT THAT.
YEAH.
YOU CREATED THOSE WINGS YOURSELVES?

It's not going to happen.
BOTH ARE TRYING SO HARD WITH ONLY ONE WING.

YEAH.
WE WANT TO FLY LIKE THAT.
THAT?
OH, A HAWK.

SHE'S LIKE A CHICKEN THAT HAD ITS HEAD CUT OFF.
LOOK at NIJUKU.
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
TMP
TN


WE WANTED TO FLY BEFORE.
WE TOLD PROFESSOR AND HE GAVE US WINGS.
AND WE REMEMBERED.

...SHE'S more like a weather-vane than a bird.
AND SANJU...
CAN'T BALANCE WITH ONE WING
TWIRL

THAT'S USELESS.
BUT WE ONLY HAD ONE EACH.

I wonder if they're going to be okay.

WOW. THEY'RE DETERMINED
CAN WE GO?
I'M GOING TO PRACTICE SOMEWHERE ELSE.
SANJU IS MAD
HMM...

HMM.
I'M JUST GUESSING...
THEIR "PROFESSOR" WAS AN IDIOT.
WHY IS IT JUST ONE WING EACH?

PRACTICE ALL YOU WANT AND MEET US THERE.
THEN WE'LL WAIT FOR YOU UNDER THAT TREE.
OKAY!
THANKS, KURO-CHA!

WHY WOULD HE DO SOMETHING SO MEANINGLESS?
WHAT?
...IF IT WASN'T A MISTAKE...
...THE "PROFESSOR" DID IT ON PURPOSE.

OKAY!
AND COME BACK BEFORE IT GETS DARK.
GOT IT?
BUT DON'T DO ANYTHING DANGEROUS.

...THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY FLY AWAY.
BECAUSE IF HE GAVE THEM WINGS...

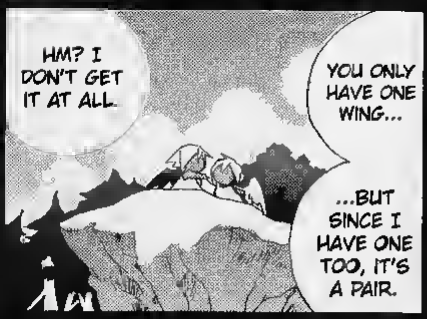
SEN...
OKAY!!
...tonight's dinner is going to be "chicken soup."
If you break any of the rules...
GOT IT?
SIMMER
SIMMER

I WON'T GO BACK UNTIL I CAN FLY.
YEAH.
YOU WANT TO FLY THAT MUCH?

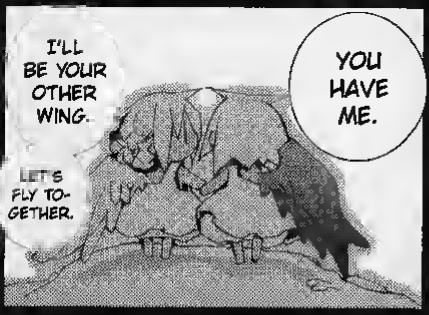
!!
SANJU, ARE YOU OKAY?

?
WHY?
OKAY.
LET'S GO SOMEWHERE HIGHER.

MAYBE JUST LIKE SEN SAID...
...WE CAN'T FLY WITH JUST ONE WING.
WAAH, WAAH!
WHY CAN'T WE FLY?


HM? I DON'T GET IT AT ALL.
YOU ONLY HAVE ONE WING...
...BUT SINCE I HAVE ONE TOO, IT'S A PAIR.

BUT KURO-CHAN PROBABLY WON'T BUY IT.
UMM. A "STORE"?
WHERE CAN I GET ONE?
I WANT ANOTHER WING


I'LL BE YOUR OTHER WING.
LET'S FLY TOGETHER.
YOU HAVE ME.

NO!!
THERE'S A LOT OF HIM, SO MAYBE HE'LL GIVE US A WING.
HOW ABOUT SEN?

LET'S TRY IT.
OKAY.

YOU CAN'T LET GO.
OKAY.
WE MOVE IT THE SAME WAY.
OKAY.

OKAY, NIJUKU.
READY, SANJU?

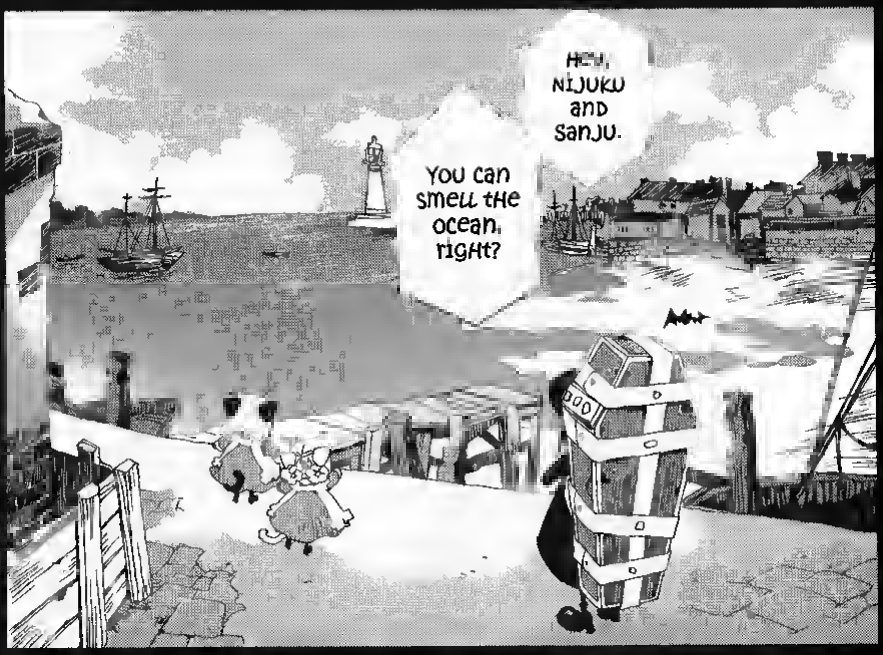
ONE...
...TWO...
...THREE!

HUH?
COULD it be CHO'S plane?
DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING COMING FROM OVER-HEAD?
.....?
AAAAAHH
FLA
FLA
FLAP
THUD

YEAH!!
I SEE.
YOU WERE ABLE TO FLY.
They fell from the sky?
?
?
WE WERE SO EXCITED!!
THE ROAD AND THIS TREE LOOKED SMALL!
GRAB
PHEW.
HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE!!
AHA HAH HAH HAH HAH!!
WHOOSH
WHEN YOU'RE HAPPY, YOUR HEART FEELS SQUEEZED.
WE CAME WALKING DOWN THAT ROAD, RIGHT?
WE FLEW!! WE FLEW!! WE FLEW!!
WE DID IT!! WE DID IT!! WE DID IT!!
WINGALE
BOUNCE
BOUNCE
IT WAS THAT BIG!
IT'S AMAZ-ING.
THE "OUTSIDE WORLD" IS AMAZ-ING.
CHA!!
OW! OW! OW!
KURO-CHAN!!
WRAP
WRAP
WHAT'S WITH YOU TWO?
SQUEEZE

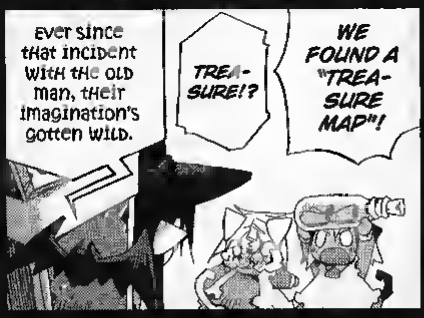
I KEEP WALKING AND WALKING.
I KEEP WALKING THE STREETS.
THE WORLD IS AS BIG AS IT WAS BEFORE.
THE JOURNEY IS TOUGH LIKE BEFORE.
What are you doing?
You keep taking off your glasses and putting them back on.
OH... YEAH.
BUT MAYBE...
...AND ENDLESS, EH?
THE WORLD IS BIG...
...WITH THESE "HALF" WINGS.
...SOMETHING FEELS LIGHTER...
...BY LOOKING AT IT THROUGH THESE GLASSES.
PERHAPS I...
...FORGOT ABOUT HOW BIG THIS WORLD IS...

YOU DIDN'T SELL THAT?
WHAT'S UP?
I SOLD THE LENS AND THE CHAIN...
...BUT I KEPT THIS.
WHY?
HMM... I CAN'T REALLY SAY WHY.
BUT I THOUGHT I COULD...
...TAKE A SHORTCUT TO ADULT-HOOD WITH THINGS LIKE THESE
I WANT TO...
...BECOME SMARTER FASTER THAN NORMAL...
...SO THAT I CAN FINISH THIS JOURNEY...
...WHILE I'M STILL WHO I AM.
THEN LET'S GO.
YEAH.
HOW'S THE COFFIN COMING ALONG?
IT'S EASIER TO CARRY NOW...
...BUT IT'S STILL HEAVY...
DRAG


Hey, Nijuku and Sanju.
You can smell the ocean, right?

Nijuku! Look at this!

I see a tall "castle"!
It's the "ocean"!


Ever since that incident with the old man, their imagination's gotten wild.
Trea-sure!?
We found a "trea-sure map"!

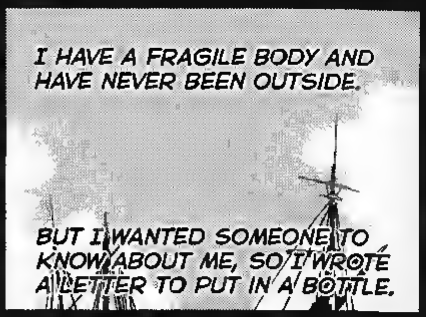
"Pirit"? You mean "Pirate"?
That's just a fisherman's boat.
Is that a "pirit" ship!?

WE CAN'T.
A FRIEND!
It's a letter from a lamentable girl.
LET'S GO SEE HER!
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS LETTER CAME FROM.

Judging from the paper and ink, it doesn't look too old.
OH, THIS IS A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE.

...WHY DON'T YOU WRITE BACK?
BUT IF YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING...
OKAY!!

"DEAR THE PERSON WHO FOUND THIS LETTER ..."
LET'S SEE
WHAT DOES IT SAY?
...I AM WRITING THIS FROM MY BED.


I HAVE A FRAGILE BODY AND HAVE NEVER BEEN OUTSIDE.
BUT I WANTED SOMEONE TO KNOW ABOUT ME, SO I WROTE A LETTER TO PUT IN A BOTTLE.

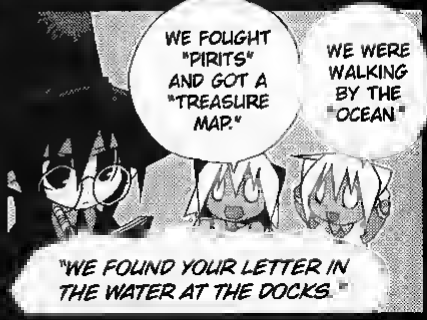
I'LL WRITE IT FOR YOU
OKAY.
?
SCRIBBLE
SCRIBBLE

IF YOU DON'T MIND...
...CAN YOU... BECOME MY FIRST FRIEND?

HERE'S HOPING THAT THIS LETTER WILL REACH YOU...
SINCERELY, A TRAVELER.

UMM, "HELLO."
DEAR "BOTTLE PERSON ..."
"DEAR PERSON WHO SENT THE BOTTLED MESSAGE: HELLO. IT IS NICE TO MEET YOU."

IF WE'RE LUCKY.
YEAH.
WOULD THE BOTTLE GO BACK?


WE FOUGHT "PIRITS" AND GOT A "TREASURE MAP."
WE WERE WALKING BY THE "OCEAN."
"WE FOUND YOUR LETTER IN THE WATER AT THE DOCKS."

IF IT'S MEANT TO BE.
YEAH.
DO YOU THINK SHE'LL WRITE BACK?

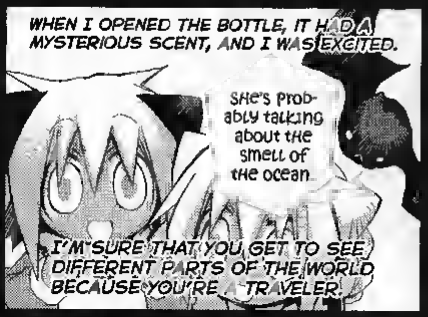
WE WANT BOTTLE PERSON TO FIND US TOO.
WE FOUND BOTTLE PERSON
"THE LITTLE CHILDREN WHO TRAVEL WITH ME WOULD LIKE TO BE YOUR FRIENDS."

HUH!?
LET'S COME BACK HERE TOMORROW!

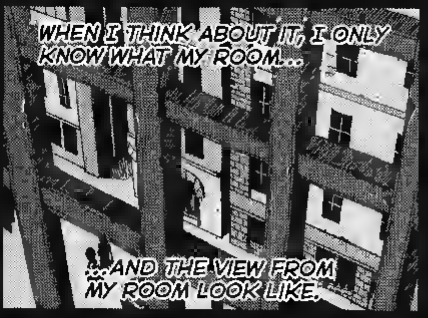
"And the lovely bat would like to be your lover..."
YAY!
OKAY, IT'S DONE.

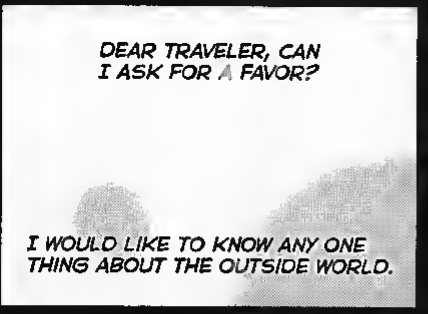
THE BOTTLE PERSON!?
IT LOOKS LIKE A RESPONSE TO OUR LETTER.
"DEAR TRAVELERS..."
THANK YOU FOR THE LETTER. I'M REALLY HAPPY.

THOSE TWO DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE THE DOCKS BECAUSE OF THE LETTER
SIGH. WE WERE SET BACK.


WHEN I OPENED THE BOTTLE, IT HAD A MYSTERIOUS SCENT, AND I WAS EXCITED.
SHE'S PROBABLY TALKING ABOUT THE SMELL OF THE OCEAN.
I'M SURE THAT YOU GET TO SEE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD BECAUSE YOU'RE A TRAVELER.

HEY, TRY TO STAY CLOSE, GIRLS.
WHERE?
SANJU, LOOK. THERE'S A BUNCH OF FLOWERS HERE.
BUSTLE


WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, I ONLY KNOW WHAT MY ROOM...
...AND THE VIEW FROM MY ROOM LOOK LIKE.


DEAR TRAVELER, CAN I ASK FOR A FAVOR?
I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW ANY ONE THING ABOUT THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

ARE YOU SERIOUS!?
THE "TREASURE MAP"!!
WE FOUND IT AGAIN!!

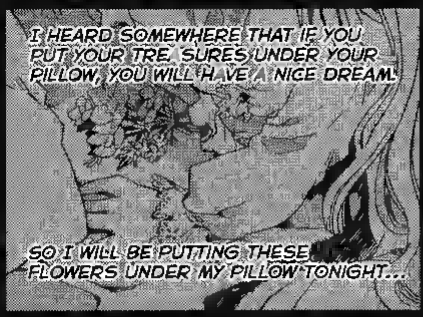
DONE!
WE'RE DONE!
I'LL WRITE BACK!
I KNOW A LOT ABOUT THE OUTSIDE WORLD!
ABOUT THE "OUTSIDE WORLD," EH?
There are no streams or rivers around here.
HUH? OH YEAH.
BUT HOW DO WE SEND IT?
I'M THE FRIEND OF THE BOTTLE PERSON!
NO!
If it's you, it would make no sense.
Among us, I'm most acquainted with the world.
REALLY?
WHERE WE FOUND IT?
MAYBE YOU COULD PUT IT BACK WHERE YOU FOUND IT.
HEY, KURO-CHAN.
HUH?
...GROWS LEGS AND WALKS BACK TO ITS MASTER
YEAH. MAYBE THIS BOT-TLE...
THESE FLOW-ERS. DO YOU THINK SHE'LL BE HAPPY?
IF I TELL HER...

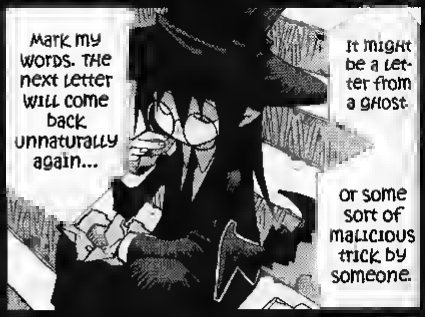
WHERE DID THAT COME FROM!?
THE BOTTLE PERSON?
OH. IT'S ANOTHER RESPONSE.

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT
...THAT BOTTLE IS WEIRD!!

"THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I RECEIVED FLOWERS THAT DID NOT SMELL LIKE MEDICINE OR PERFUME."
"THANK YOU FOR THE LOVELY GIFTS."
BUT BEC USE I DON'T GET MUCH SUN IN THIS ROOM, THE FLOWERS WILTED IN D Y.

AND IN SUCH A SHORT PERIOD TOO.
TRUE.
THERE'S NO WAY OUR RESPONSE WOULD'VE MADE IT BY BOTTLE.


I HEARD SOMEWHERE THAT IF YOU PUT YOUR TRE SURES UNDER YOUR PILLOW, YOU WILL H AVE A NICE DREAM.
SO I WILL BE PUTTING THESE FLOWERS UNDER MY PILLOW TONIGHT...


MARK MY WORDS. THE NEXT LETTER WILL COME BACK UNNATURALLY AGAIN...
IT MIGHT BE A LETTER FROM A GHOST
OR SOME SORT OF MALICIOUS TRICK BY SOMEONE.

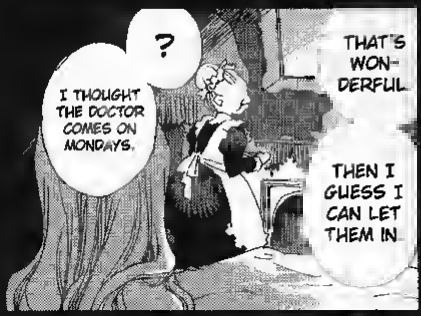
...HOPING THAT ONE DAY I CAN...
...SEE A FIELD OF FLOWERS WITH MY OWN EYES.

すーー
KONK

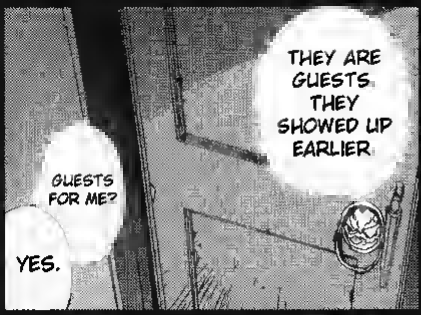
...WHEN A LADY ASKED ME FOR SOMETHING
I WAS DOING BUSINESS IN A PLACE A FEW DAYS AGO...
YEAH.
SHE LIKED IT!
THAT'S FINE BUT...
CAN YOU PLEASE BECOME HER PEN PAL?
MY MASTER IS LONELY AND LOOKING FOR A FRIEND.
I TOOK THE JOB BECAUSE I WANTED MONEY.
I'M TALKING TO YOU.
...ARE YOU PLANNING TO FOLLOW US AS LONG AS OUR LETTERS CONTINUE?
?
SO I GOT LAZY AND THREW AWAY THE BOTTLE
BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO WRITE
PEEK
UGH!! YOU!!
HEY, LONG TIME NO SEE!
I'M AMAZED YOU NOTICED.
What bad luck we had...
YOU GUYS PICKED IT UP AND TOOK IT WITH YOU
AND JUST MY LUCK.
IF YOU KNEW, WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME!?
WHOA, YOU KNEW FROM THEN!?
I SAW YOUR MOTORCYCLE MANY TIMES
EVER SINCE THE DOCKS
IT'S KE!!
IT'S KE!!

MISS, ARE YOU FEELING WELL ENOUGH TO BE UP?
I'M FINE.
I ACTUALLY FEEL GREAT TODAY.

HE'S USING YOU AGAIN, LIKE ALWAYS.
THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
HEY, KURO-CHAN.


?
I THOUGHT THE DOCTOR COMES ON MONDAYS.
THAT'S WONDERFUL.
THEN I GUESS I CAN LET THEM IN.

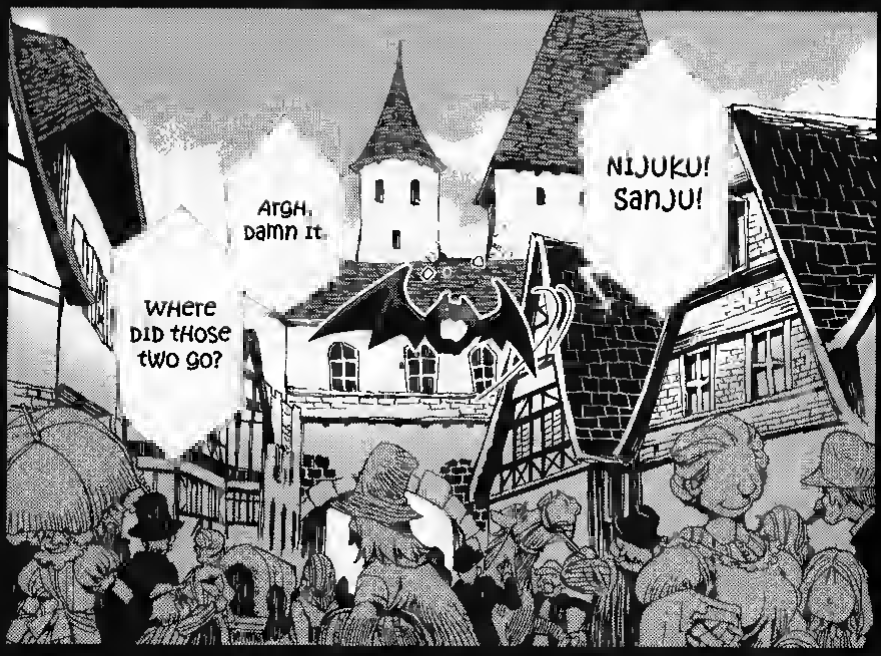
THE BOTTLE PERSON IS WAITING.
WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT OUR NEXT LETTER?


THEY ARE GUESTS. THEY SHOWED UP EARLIER.
GUESTS FOR ME?
YES.

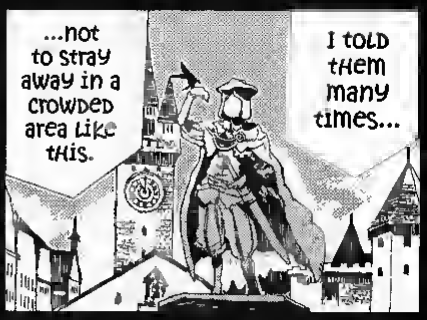
IF YOU'RE GOING TO WRITE BACK, I'LL DELIVER IT.
OH...
SEE?

I'M SURE...
...YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO SEE THEM.

.....
WELL, LET'S SEE...

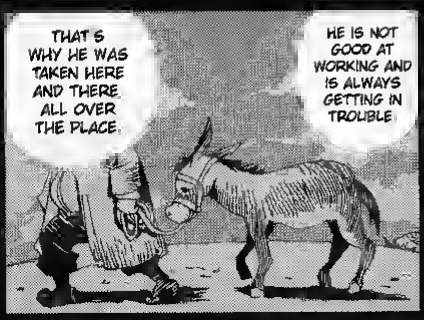

NIJUKU! SANJU!
ARGH, DAMN IT.
WHERE DID THOSE TWO GO?

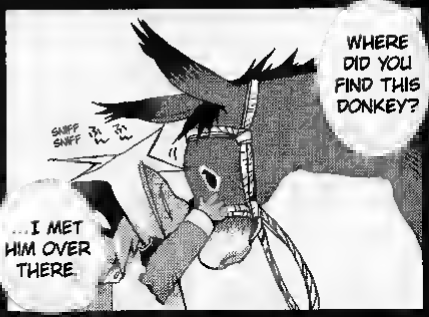
WAVE
WAVE


...NOT TO STRAY AWAY IN A CROWDED AREA LIKE THIS.
I TOLD THEM MANY TIMES...

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
YOU'RE NOT SURPRISING ME THIS TIME.
SO THIS ONE WITH THE BLACK EARS IS NIJUKU, RIGHT?
SANJU AND...

THAT'S MY LINE...
WHAT!?
OH, I FOUND YOU.


THAT'S WHY HE WAS TAKEN HERE AND THERE ALL OVER THE PLACE.
HE IS NOT GOOD AT WORKING AND IS ALWAYS GETTING IN TROUBLE.


WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS DONKEY?
SNIFF SNIFF
...I MET HIM OVER THERE.

THIS IS WHAT HE SAID. "SO CAN YOU LET ME GO?"
"I'LL PROBABLY GET IN TROUBLE AT MY NEW PLACE AND WILL BE SOLD AGAIN."

I HEARD THAT TOO.
I DID HEAR THAT AN ANIMAL RAN AWAY AT THE MARKET-PLACE.

CAN WE TAKE HIM WITH US?
KURO-CHAN, PLEASE.
UMM ...

YOU'RE RIGHT. LET'S RETURN HIM.
THAT WOMAN.
If we get caught now, we're going to be accused of robbery.
WAIT!

I'm allowed to get mad, right?
THIS IS WHERE I get mad, right?
OH YEAH.
UNFORTUNATELY, WE CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE ANIMALS.
ぷん

HOW?
LISTEN TO HIS SIDE OF THE STORY TOO!

YEAH, HOW ABOUT THOSE PEOPLE?
There's someone in that barley field.
PERK

...BUT IF WE FIND THE BEST PLACE FOR THIS DONKEY...
WE CAN'T TAKE HIM WITH US...

If you work hard, they might give you barley every day.
That's great.
HUH? YOU LIKE BARLEY?
I'LL GO ASK.

And what kind of place are you looking for?
YEAH!!
...THREE OF YOU ARE GOING TO BE SATISFIED RIGHT?

GOOD LUCK!!
IF YOU CAN CARRY THIS, I'LL GIVE YOU A STACK OF BARLEY.
CAN YOU BRING THE DONKEY OVER HERE?

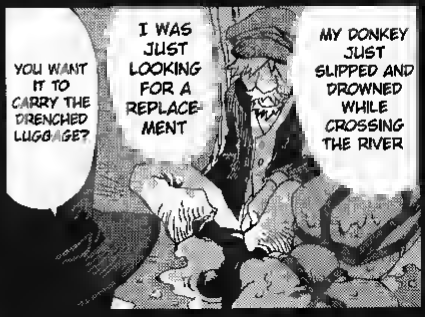
BUT SINCE THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
HE REALLY WANTS TO GO BACK TO HIS MOM.

It doesn't seem like he's compromising at all.
WELL, WE'LL DO OUR BEST.
...WHERE HE CAN EAT A LOT AND WORK A LITTLE.
...HE WOULD SETTLE FOR A PLACE...
A PLACE WHERE HE WOULD BE PETTED ON THE NOSE.

HE'S SAYING HE'S SORRY.
BUT PLEASE
Next time you do, leave the girls behind.
I DON'T MIND YOU RUNNING AWAY...

IF YOU HAVE A DONKEY, CAN YOU HELP ME OUT?
HEY, YOU TRAVELERS OVER THERE.
CHEE
TROT
TROT

IT'S PRETTY HEAVY. ARE YOU SURE?
MY LUGGAGE?
CAN I HAVE SOME TOO?
HE SAID HE'LL CARRY YOUR LUGGAGE TO MAKE UP FOR IT.
YEAH, I THINK HE WOULD BE OKAY.


YOU WANT IT TO CARRY THE DRENCHED LUGGAGE?
I WAS JUST LOOKING FOR A REPLACEMENT
MY DONKEY JUST SLIPPED AND DROWNED WHILE CROSSING THE RIVER

SEE?
WOW, YOU'RE AMAZING.

THAT ONE HAS SALT.
WHEN IT FELL INTO THE WATER, MOST OF IT WAS WASHED AWAY.
IT'S LIGHT.
OH, THEN THIS DONKEY COULD EASILY CARRY IT.

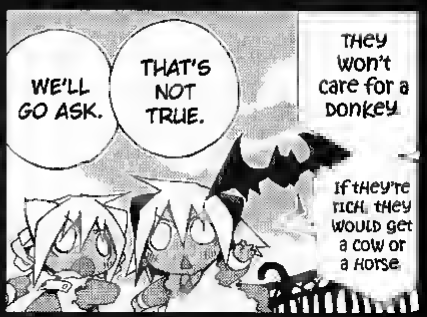
Maybe he just thinks he's weak.
IT'S NOT LIKE HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY STRENGTH
...OR HE'S JUST REALLY LAZY.
THE PEOPLE WHO RESCUED HIM?

HEY!! WAIT!!
BUT THIS ONE HAS COTTON IN IT.
MOISTURE
DASH!!
HEAVY

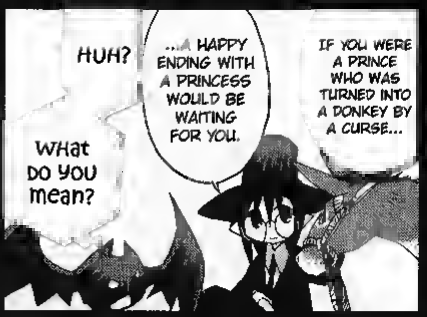
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE A PROMISED ENDING.
I'M SURE THIS DONKEY FEELS LIKE THAT PRINCE.
THAT'S TRUE.

HOW ABOUT THAT BIG HOUSE?
NAH, I DON'T THINK SO.

KURO-CHAN! SEN!!
THERE'S SOMEONE WHO'D GIVE YOU UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FROM THE BEGINNING.
A FAIRY TALE IS SO UNREALISTIC.
I WANT TO BE PART OF THAT FAIRY TALE WORLD TOO.


WE'LL GO ASK.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
THEY WON'T CARE FOR A DONKEY.
IF THEY'RE RICH, THEY WOULD GET A COW OR A HORSE.

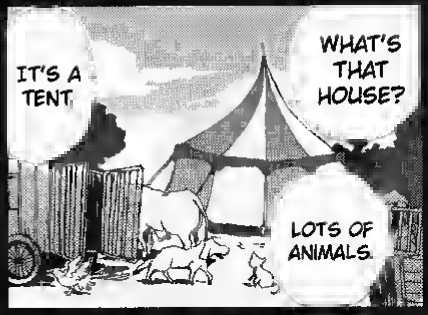
!! ARE YOU SERIOUS!?
THEY WOULD KEEP THE DONKEY INSIDE THE HOUSE!
THAT HOUSE LIKES ANIMALS!!


HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
...A HAPPY ENDING WITH A PRINCESS WOULD BE WAITING FOR YOU.
IF YOU WERE A PRINCE WHO WAS TURNED INTO A DONKEY BY A CURSE...

GO BACK THERE AND TELL THEM THE DEAL'S OFF!!
YEAH! WHEN WE LOOKED INSIDE THE HOUSE...
...THERE WERE MANY ANIMALS LIVING THERE!

AND HE TRAVELS TO SEEK THE PERSON WHO WOULD TRULY LOVE HIM.
A WITCH PUTS A CURSE ON A PRINCE AND HE TURNS INTO A DONKEY.
IT'S A FAIRY TALE FROM SOMEWHERE.

SO THEY SAY.
HOW ABOUT IT?
HE COULD HELP US WITH OUR TRAVELS.
WE'D LOVE TO TAKE HIM.
I SEE, THIS DONKEY NEEDS A HOME.


IT'S A TENT.
WHAT'S THAT HOUSE?
LOTS OF ANIMALS.

OF COURSE.
I'LL SWEAR TO YOUR CUTENESS.
YOU'LL FEED HIM WELL?
YOU WON'T PICK ON HIM?
HE CAN'T DO "MUSIC."

MUSIC GROUP? NOT A CIRCUS?
WE'RE A MUSIC GROUP.
ARE YOU A TRAVELING CIRCUS?

AREN'T YOU HAPPY TOO?
I'M SO GLAD!!

TA-DAA
YES. THEY'RE THE PERFORMERS.

.....

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
NO!!
...Let's give up.
WON'T FIT HIM AT ALL.

PLEASE ENDURE IT, PETER.
BUT I'M TIRED, ONEE-CHAN.
OR WE WON'T BE ABLE TO REACH HOME BY TODAY.
LET ME REST FOR A SECOND.

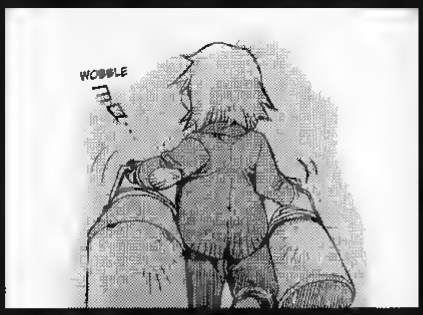
HE REALLY SAID HE DIDN'T WANT TO GO WITH THEM?
I THOUGHT WE FOUND THE RIGHT THING.
HMM.
YEAH.

WE COULDN'T BUY THE DONKEY.
WE CAN'T HELP IT.
BUT I WAS ONLY SUPPOSED TO CARRY THE EMPTY MILK CAN.
SIGH

REALLY!?
...HE MIGHT JUST HAVE TO COME WITH US.
WE'LL NEVER FIND A PLACE BETTER THAN THAT.
HE CAN!?
YEAH. IF WE CAN'T FIND A PLACE...

DON'T FALL AND SPILL THE MILK!
COME ON, PICK THEM UP!!
OKAY...

YOU WOULD RATHER STAY WITH US, RIGHT?
YOU WOULD, RIGHT?

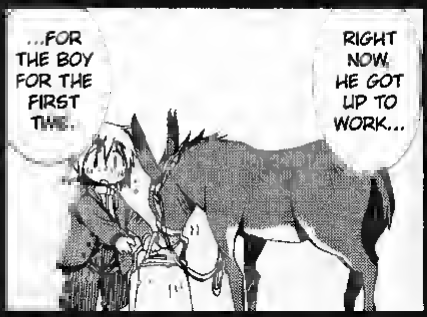

WOBBLE

NO!!

YOU SHOULD BE GLAD THAT HE WAS ABLE TO FIND HIS "BEST PLACE" ON HIS OWN.
'KAY...
OKAY...
COME ON. YOU TWO. STOP POUTING.

SHH.
DONKEY?
CLOP
CLOP

OH!
HUH?
ALTHOUGH HE TOOK A LONG TIME TO REALIZE WHAT HE ALREADY HAD.


...FOR THE BOY FOR THE FIRST TIME.
RIGHT NOW, HE GOT UP TO WORK...

WE WASTED A WHOLE DAY FOR HIS SELFISH ACT, EH?
GEEZ...
AND FOR THE SELFISH TWO TOO.

...AND US TOO.
HE FORGOT ABOUT HIMSELF...

...BUT THIS IS ALSO A TALE ABOUT A SELFISH, BUT LOVED, DONKEY.
IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A FAIRY TALE...

...WAS REALLY A JOURNEY TO FIND SOME-ONE YOU LOVE.
THE JOURNEY TO FIND SOME-ONE WHO LOVES YOU...

To walk into an unknown town and to meet unknown people—
it's what happens when you travel.
But it was not that easy for the young traveler to accept this.

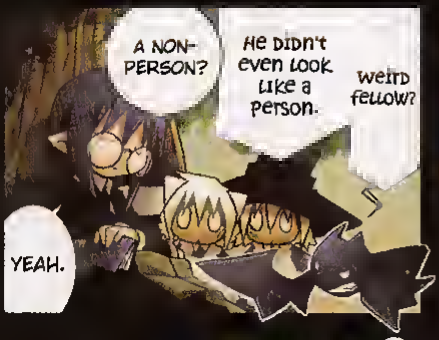
A LONG JOURNEY BRINGS MANY THINGS.
IF YOU'RE A "TRAVELER," YOU SHOULD WEAR A HAT.
WHILE WE WERE RESTING UNDER A TREE...
IT WAS A TYPICAL DAY ON OUR JOURNEY.
A HAT WILL PROTECT YOU FROM THESE THINGS.
COLD, RAINY NIGHTS AND THE SCORCHING SUN.
AND THE STARES OF THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.
A PAST NOT SO LONG AGO.
...I HAD A DREAM OF THE PAST.
...WAS ANOTHER TRAVELER WHO TAUGHT ME HOW TO TRAVEL.
BUT I CAN ONLY SEE HALF OF WHAT I CAN USUALLY SEE.
THE PERSON I MET...

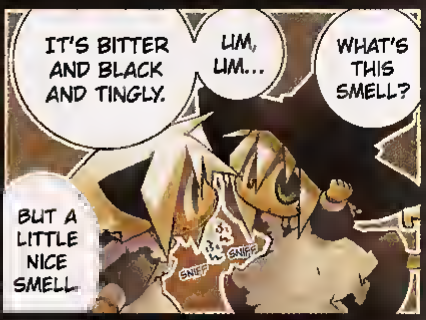
I GUESS IT STILL SMELLS LIKE ITS PREVIOUS OWNER.
OH, HIM.
THEY'RE PROBABLY TALKING ABOUT THE TOBACCO.

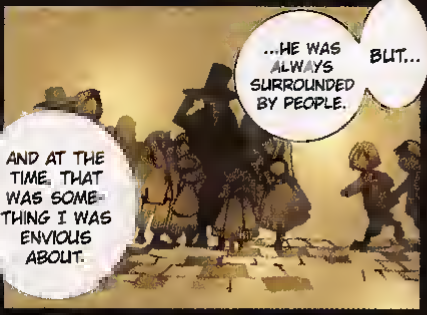
OKAY.
IF YOU'RE GOING OUT IN THE SUN YOU CAN'T TAKE THAT OFF.
LET ME SEE

HE WAS A WEIRD FELLOW.
HUH? WELL, LET'S SEE.
THE PREVIOUS OWNER OF THIS HAT?
WHAT KIND OF A PERSON IS HE?

YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S NOT KURO-CHAN'S SMELL.
I SMELL SOME-THING.
HUH?


A NON-PERSON?
HE DIDN'T EVEN LOOK LIKE A PERSON.
WEIRD FELLOW?
YEAH.

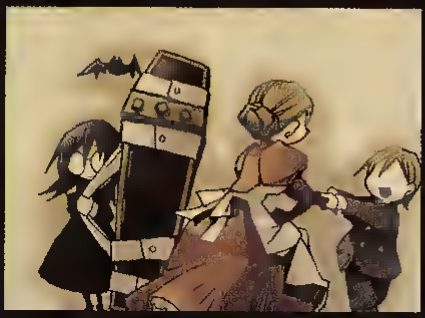

IT'S BITTER AND BLACK AND TINGLY.
UM, UM...
WHAT'S THIS SMELL?
BUT A LITTLE NICE SMELL.
SNIFF
SNIFF


...HE WAS ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE.
BUT...
AND AT THE TIME, THAT WAS SOME-THING I WAS ENVIOUS ABOUT.

THEY'RE POETS.
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE THEY ARE SPEAKING A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE.
MY NOSE IS ITCHY, THOUGH.
OR A CODE
YEAH, IT IS.

You have the bad habit of giving up easily.
Then let's decide with the first person we see when we turn that corner.
SEN, FORGET IT.
NO ONE WILL LISTEN TO ME.
A WITCH THAT USES BLACK MAGIC?
HUH? AND? YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THIS WITCH?
NEVER HEARD OF HER. TRY ASKING SOMEONE ELSE.
.....
"IF THAT PERSON ALSO TELLS US TO GO SOMEWHERE ELSE..."
"...WE'LL LEAVE THIS TOWN."
DON'T KNOW ANY. TRY SOMEWHERE ELSE.
...A PLACE TO REST...
IS THAT ALL YOU NEED?
.....
HOW LONG HAVE I JUST BEEN TALKING TO MYSELF?
From the part where the lady asks, "Is that all you need?"
THUMP
It would be nice if they would specify the "somewhere else" for once.
That's the 37th "try somewhere else" we've heard today.
...YEAH.
YEAH.

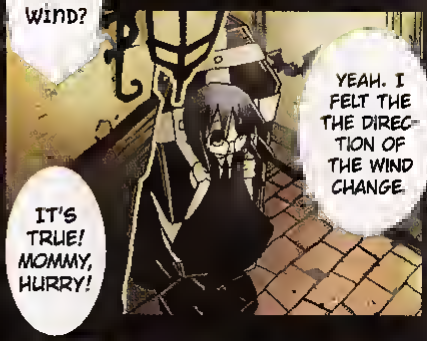
COME ON, HURRY!!
OKAY, OKAY.



IS THAT THE "BLACK TRAVELER?"
WHAT'S WITH THAT WEIRD DUDE?

WELL, I GUESS IT WAS TOO DEPRESSING ANYWAYS.
...HUH?

OH, A BREEZE.
WHOOSH


WHAT, THE WIND?
YEAH. I FELT THE THE DIRECTION OF THE WIND CHANGE.
IT'S TRUE! MOMMY, HURRY!

THE BLACK TRAVELER CAME!!

...Just wasn't too fond of outsiders...
You know, I thought this town...
LET ME GO.
I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT.
Don't be stupid
I wouldn't live in a world where silly faces like that were allowed as people
!?
SEN, ARE THERE PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE THAT IN THE WORLD?
...but I guess that's not it.
WELL,
I guess it's just us.
BUT HE'S FITTING IN WITH THE TOWNS-PEOPLE.
TELL US YOUR JOURNEY TALES.
IT'S BEEN AWHILE.
OH!?
BUZZ
LET'S GO, SEN.
HUH? GO WHERE?
WHAT ABOUT OUR BET!?
OVER THERE.
AND HE'S A HERO TO THEM TOO.
I MADE BREAD WITH THE WHEAT SEED YOU GAVE ME. PLEASE TRY IT!
THANKS TO YOU, THE FAMINE OF TWO YEARS AGO SEEMS LIKE A DREAM.
HMM
CHATTER
OVER WHERE?
Can I slug him already? Can I?
NO, LUCY I'M GOING TO BE HIS BRIDE!
WHEN I GROW UP I'M GOING TO BE YOUR BRIDE!
GRAB
SQUEEZE

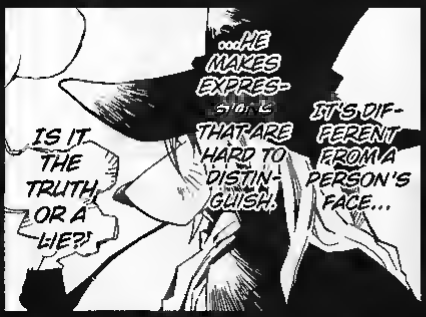
OH, THESE?
You're the fishy one with the sunglasses at this hour!!
LET ME GO!
A PLACE TO SLEEP.
A PLACE TO SLEEP.
DURING THE DAY, THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD IS TOO CLEAR AND BORING.
I PUT THEM ON SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE IT'S NIGHTTIME.
THIS GUY'S WEIRD.
N!!
OH! I'M SORRY.
BUMP
SO I WANTED TO TAKE A WALK AND CHECK IT OUT.
...WHERE YOU CAN SEE WHAT YOU USUALLY CAN'T SEE.
!!
WHY, HELLO THERE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
OH?
You're dumber than you look, aren't you?
...SINCE I CAN'T SEE THAT WELL, I KEEP BUMPING INTO THINGS
BUT...
DIRTY
No, you got it wrong!! We didn't do anything wrong!!
Hey, WHY are you running away!?
DASH
GRAB

...I SAW YOU TWO IN TOWN DURING THE DAY.
GOBBLE
TO TELL THE TRUTH...
GOBBLE
I'M ALSO A TRAVELER, AND I RENTED A SMALL SHACK OVER THERE.
YOU GUYS WERE LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO SLEEP TONIGHT?
So you knew what we were doing...
...YOU GUYS ARE TRAVELERS, LIKE ME.
FROM WHAT I CAN TELL!!
GUL
GUL
I'VE WANTED TO TALK TO YOU SINCE THEN.
What DO YOU say?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAY WITH ME?
I HAVE SPACE FOR A CHILD AND A SMALL ANIMAL.
BY THE WAY, PART OF THAT DINNER IS MINE...
.....
...I DON'T WANT TO.
I'M ABOUT TO HAVE DINNER.
I'm okay with whatever.
.....
NEVER MIND.
FLAP
FLAP
YOUR GRANDMOTHER SAID WISE THINGS.
My late grandmother used to always tell me to accept offers graciously.
Well, you know...
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

SO YOU'RE TRAVELING EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T LIKE TO TRAVEL?
...HMM?
.....
I saw you being praised by the towns-people today...
We...well, actually, just her...
...we're not good at it. We had a horrible time today in this town.
AFTER A FEW DAYS, I GET TIRED OF BEING POLITE.
I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE.
OH?
...SO I THOUGHT YOU'D BE staying at a better place.
THAT'S WHY I'M STAYING IN THE WOOD-SHED OF A LOCAL FARMER.
I'M NOT ALWAYS NICE LIKE THIS, YOU KNOW.
If you didn't find us, we would probably be sleeping on the streets.
Then WHY DID YOU HELP US?
THAT'S WHY I LIKE TRAVEL-ING.
AND IT FITS ME TO LIVE DAY BY DAY, PLACE TO PLACE.
SERI-OUS-LY!?
...LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, PERHAPS.
I WAS KIDDING.
...DON'T LIKE TO TRAVEL.
I...

OH.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THIS PERSON'S WORDS ARE LIKE HIS FACE.

WHEN WE FIRST MET...
...YOU KEPT LOOKING AT MY FACE.
.....


IS IT THE TRUTH OR A LIE?!
...HE MAKES EXPRESSIONS THAT ARE HARD TO DISTINGUISH.
IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A PERSON'S FACE...

USUALLY I DON'T LIKE THAT. I GET IRRITATED LIKE WHEN I RUN OUT OF TOBACCO.
BUT...
FOR SOME REASON I DIDN'T GET IRRITATED WITH YOU.

.....

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU AND I ARE...
...WELL...
...YOU KNOW.

NO WAY!!
WITH MY GENTLE MANLIKE DEMEANOR...?
DID YOU ALSO FALL IN LOVE WITH ME?
I WAS KIDDING
AND WHY ARE YOU ANSWERING?

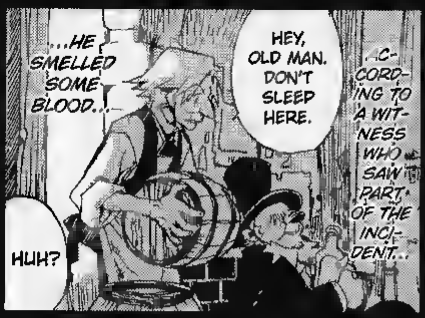
BUT I THINK THAT'S THE REASON.

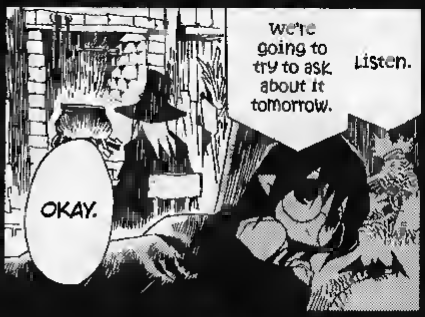
...THE NICEST PERSON WAS AN "OUTSIDER."
IN THE END, IN THIS TOWN...

So what do you want to do?
.....
You don't want to leave this town like this, do you?

...A MYSTERIOUS INCIDENT OCCURRED.
AND THAT NIGHT...

THE "bet" IS STILL ON, YOU KNOW.
AND maybe that guy would know about the "witch."


...HE SMELLED SOME BLOOD...
HEY, OLD MAN. DON'T SLEEP HERE.
...ACCORDING TO A WITNESS WHO SAW PART OF THE INCIDENT...
HUH?


We're going to try to ask about it tomorrow.
Listen.
OKAY.

...WHO RAN AWAY.
...AND SAW "SOMEONE" IN BLACK...

.....

...IS THE [illegible] I STAYED AT WITH THE TRAVELER I MET.
THE SECOND PLACE...
THE FIRST PLACE IS THE MAIN STREET I WALKED DOWN WITH THE COLD STARES.
I RE-MEMBER THREE PLACES IN THIS TOWN.
...IS THE INSIDE OF THE JAIL I WAS TAKEN TO THE NEXT DAY.
AND THE THIRD PLACE...
There are no laws that apply to bats, so I'm okay.
.....
.....
HOW ABOUT YOU?
SO YOU DID.
NOTHING! I WOULD NEVER!
DID YOU DO anything to get arrested?

Something about a person dressed in black killing someone.
The cops explained it to us, didn't they?
...but he's popular among the townspeople. In contrast, we're fishy outsiders.
There's one more person dressed in black in this town...
So you're saying that the traveler is the culprit?
Maybe the guy killed was the guy who sent the postcard.
I'm saying that we were framed.
.....
NO, IDIOT.
When I woke up, he was already gone
It's so early.
Huh? Where's the traveler?
Let's try to remember from this morning.
Is it for us?
What's this? A letter?
No, it's for the traveler.
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME AS SOON AS YOU GET THIS POSTCARD.
It's from a guy named Yasubu Carl Wilson.
Darn.
It's a guy.
Ooh, a love letter!?
...the cops are really hard workers.
If we're arrested for that...
And we took it too.
Maybe it's because we read this without permission.

I need to go find something to prove our innocence or evidence to point to the real killer
Anyway, if we don't do something, we're stuck here.
Luckily, I can get out of here.

HUH?
HEY, COME OUT.
CLANG
YOU'RE FREE TO GO.
CLANG

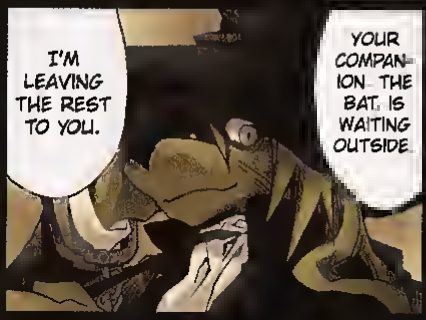
Can you release all of the bats?
So this postcard is our clue, eh?
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP

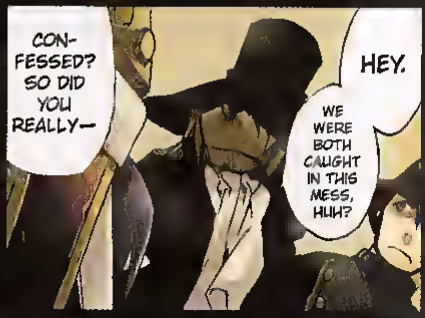
SEN FOUND EVIDENCE AL-READY?
I MEAN, DID A BAT COME FOR ME?
HUH? NO.

FLAP
FLAP
OH. CAN YOU LEAVE ONE BAT WITH ME?
What will you get lonely if you're by yourself?
FLAP

THE REAL CULPRIT CON-FESSED.

You've got some nerve.
THIS ONE IS A HOSTAGE
NO, I DON'T WANT YOU TO DITCH ME.


I'M LEAVING THE REST TO YOU.
YOUR COMPANION THE BAT IS WAITING OUTSIDE.


CONFESSED? SO DID YOU REALLY—
HEY.
WE WERE BOTH CAUGHT IN THIS MESS, HUH?

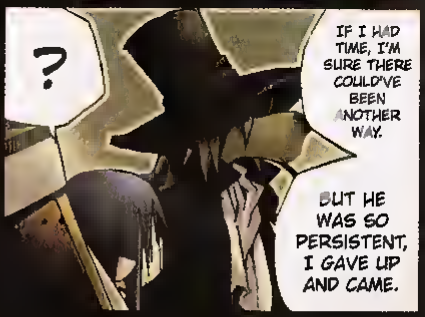
YOU CAN GO NOW.
COME ON.
.....?

I'M MORE INVOLVED IN THIS CASE THAN YOU ARE.
I VOLUNTEERED TO COME.

HUH? OH.
DO YOU KNOW YASU?
OH YEAH.
DO YOU KNOW THIS PERSON LISTED HERE?

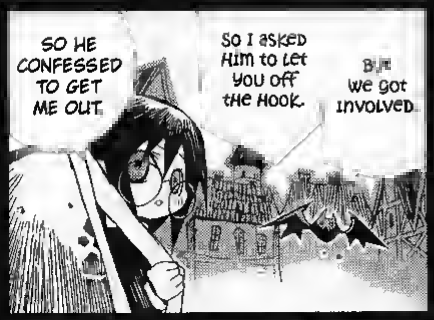
SO I CAN'T LET MYSELF GET YOU INVOLVED.

THAT'S YASUBU C. WILSON
SEE THAT GUY WHO BROUGHT THE CULPRIT?


?
IF I HAD TIME, I'M SURE THERE COULD'VE BEEN ANOTHER WAY.
BUT HE WAS SO PERSISTENT, I GAVE UP AND CAME.

He heard about the case and thought it was fishy.
I saw the traveler near Yasubu's house.

NO WONDER. THAT OUTFIT...
OH MY!
I HEAR THE CULPRIT WAS THE BLACK TRAVELER.
THAT'S WHY I SAID WE SHOULDN'T TRUST OUTSIDERS.


SO HE CONFESSED TO GET ME OUT.
So I asked him to let you off the hook.
BUT we got involved.

SEN!
OH, there you are.

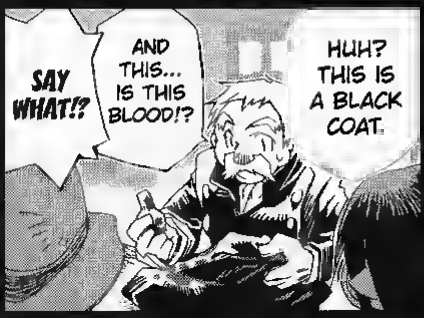
Actually, I don't want to get involved in any more trouble.
HELP ME SAVE HIM!
WE HAVE TO HELP HIM.
I'M TIRED OF FLYING AROUND.

...for the traveler, not us.
The frame was set up...
WHAT'S GOING ON? I DON'T GET IT.

Okay!! I'll DO it!!
I'LL LET YOU GO TO THE BAR IN THE NEXT TOWN!!
BRING IT ON!!
AND YOU CAN STAY OUT UNTIL MORNING!

That's the guy.
He planned to call for the traveler to come here and frame him.
You saw the Yasubu guy who sent the postcard, right?

SEN! LOOK, BLACK CLOTHES.
WHAT!?
IS THIS HOUSE OKAY?
It's fine.
HURRY and go in. Someone's going to see us.
NO ONE'S HERE?
Yep.
But even if we know that, we can't do anything.
SO IT REALLY WAS HIM.
HE SCRAP-BOOKS THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES REGARDING THE TOWN.
It's a room that screams "Justice" and "Loyalty."
Even if we speak the same language and have the same culture...
...their logic works differently.
BECAUSE WE'RE TRAVELERS?
WHY? I THINK HE'S A GOOD COP.
I see. A guy like this is likely to commit a crime.
Hey, where are you going!?
BUT STILL...
...E WON'T KNOW UNLESS WE TRY!!
...WHO KNOWS HOW OFFENDED HE COULD BE?
If a weird outsider takes away the popularity of the town he protects...
You never know how twisted a straightlaced guy can become.


SAY WHAT!?
AND THIS... IS THIS BLOOD!?
HUH? THIS IS A BLACK COAT.

HE'S BEHAVING IN THE CELL
HOW'S THAT TRAVELER DOING?

WH-MINE!?
UM... BY HIS HOUSE.
WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS?
RIGHT.

YES.
OKAY, WE'LL INTERROGATE HIM.
W-WAIT!!
BRING HIM.

IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN THERE! I BURNED THAT COAT...
STOP LYING TO ADULTS!
You have a lot of courage drying the blood the day after your murder
I GUESS IT FELL OFF YOUR CLOTHESLINE INTO THE STREET

FLAP
UWA AH!?
WHAT THE!?
FLAP
FLAP

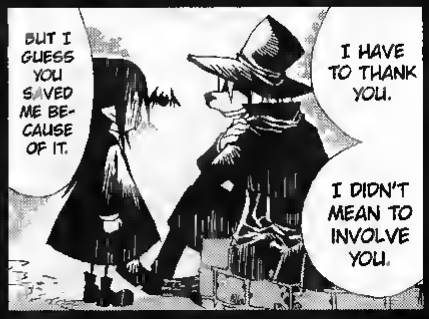
HE FELL FOR THE OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK
HEY YASU...
UH...
CASO

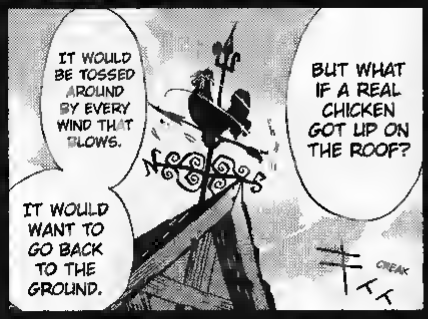
WE ALMOST DIED HERE!!
IS THAT ALL!?
I FOUND SOMETHING OVER THERE.
WEEK

YOU WERE SO POPULAR UNTIL YESTERDAY.
THAT'S HOW IT IS.
AN OUTSIDER IS AN OUTSIDER, AFTER ALL

I'LL GIVE YOU BACK YOUR COAT.
IT'S NOTHING COMPARED TO MY FREEDOM.
I GOT IT A LITTLE DIRTY, THOUGH.

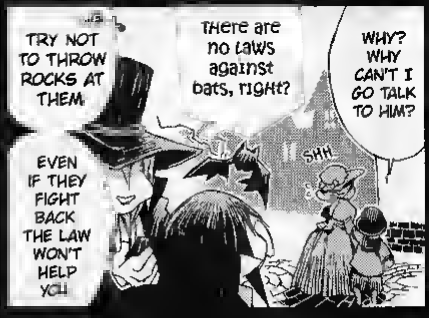
YOU SEE THAT WEATHER VANE?
WE JUST GO WHEREVER THE WIND BLOWS.
THAT'S US.
WE MIGHT LOOK RIDICULOUS THE WAY WE CHANGE WITH THE WIND.


I HAVE TO THANK YOU.
BUT I GUESS YOU SAVED ME BECAUSE OF IT.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO INVOLVE YOU.


BUT WHAT IF A REAL CHICKEN GOT UP ON THE ROOF?
IT WOULD BE TOSSED AROUND BY EVERY WIND THAT BLOWS.
IT WOULD WANT TO GO BACK TO THE GROUND.
CREAK

OH! THE TRAVELER...
NO! STAY HERE.

YOU SEEM TO HESITATE EVERY TIME THE WIND BLOWS.
THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T LIKE TO TRAVEL, RIGHT?


WHY? WHY CAN'T I GO TALK TO HIM?
There are no laws against bats, right?
TRY NOT TO THROW ROCKS AT THEM.
EVEN IF THEY FIGHT BACK THE LAW WON'T HELP YOU.
SHH

IF YOU SEE THE WHOLE WORLD, YOU'LL REALIZE THAT THE WORLD IS NOT FULL OF PRETTY THINGS.
HALF IS JUST RIGHT.
.....
OH YEAH.
LOOK INSIDE MY HANDS.
YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BECAUSE YOU'RE STILL YOU.
A LONG JOURNEY BRINGS MANY THINGS.
IF YOU'RE A "TRAVELER," YOU SHOULD WEAR A HAT.
YOU USE WHAT YOU CAN, AND WHATEVER YOU CAN'T, YOU LEAVE IN YOUR BAG.
EVERYTHING THE TRAVELER SEES IS THE PROPERTY AND TOOL OF THE TRAVELER.
THE HAT WILL PROTECT YOU FROM THESE THINGS.
COLD, RAINY NIGHTS, AND THE SCORCHING SUN,
AND THE STARES OF THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.
THAT'S THE BEST WAY TO TRAVEL.
AND IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE OTHER HALF OF WHAT THE HAT COVERS, YOU JUST NEED TO LIFT IT UP A BIT.
...I CAN ONLY SEE HALF OF WHAT I CAN USUALLY SEE.
BUT..

.....
WELL, THE WIND CHANGED.
I SHOULD GET GOING.
...I EVER SEE YOU AGAIN!?
WILL...
!?
OH YEAH.
DIDN'T YOU WANT TO ASK ME ABOUT SOME-THING?
!
THAT'S RIGHT!
I WANTED TO ASK ABOUT A BLACK WITCH...
...HUH?
WHAT'D YOU SAY?
OF COURSE.
THE WORLD IS ALWAYS CONNECTED.
IF WE'RE BOTH ALIVE AND TRAVELING, WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN
A WITCH...
.....

YOUR HAT IS BIG.
WHEN WE WEAR IT, IT TURNS DARK.
THAT'S RIGHT. HALF OF THE SCENERY IS BLOCKED.
Yeah, I remember him.
He was a traveler but didn't have any luggage.
SOMETIMES I THINK IT WAS A DREAM.
HE WAS A REALLY MYSTERIOUS PERSON.
SO YOU CAN'T SEE THE SKY?
OR THE FIRST SHINY-SHINY THERE?
NOT REALLY.
OH
THE WIND DIED.
YEAH, WE RESTED TOO LONG WE SHOULD GET GOING.
BUT...
OH, THEY'RE FINALLY AWAKE.
MMM.
NNN.
HOW many HOURS were you SLEEPING?
...IT'S PERFECT AS IT IS...
...IF I CAN LOOK UP WHEN I WANT TO.
Hurry and take that hat away from her.
IT'S ALREADY NIGHTTIME.

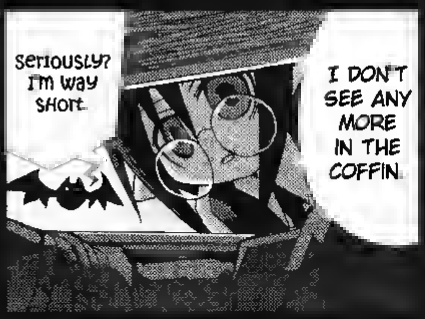
.....

WHO IS THIS?
HERE'S A RIDDLE.

DIDN'T YOU JUST LOOK AT ME?
That's easy. The answer is, a pen.
OOOH

HE JUST LEAVES HIS FOOTPRINTS ON WHITE GROUND.
HE'S A BLACK TRAVELER WHO DOESN'T TALK.
WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

THIS IS "SEN" TOO...
DON'T POINT
THIS ISN'T HIM?
BUT SEN IS HERE


SERIOUSLY? I'M WAY SHORT
I DON'T SEE ANY MORE IN THE COFFIN

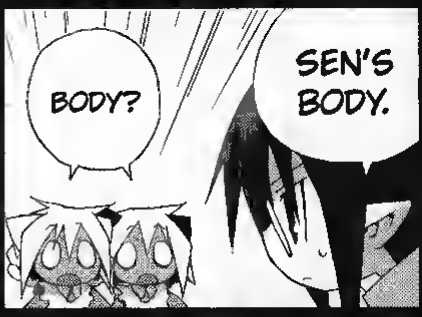
FLAP
...BUT THOSE ARE ALL "SEN."
FLAP
FLAP

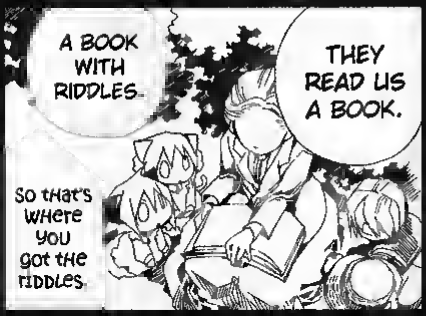
THERE ARE DEFINITELY SOME MISSING.
I CAN FEEL MY BODY IS DIFFERENT.
ARE YOU SURE YOU COUNTED CORRECTLY?

YOU GIRLS WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME IF ONE PART OF YOUR BODY WAS MISSING, RIGHT?
HE HAS A HARD TIME FUNCTIONING EVEN IF ONE "SEN" IS MISSING

HE DROPPED SOME STUFF WHILE WE WERE WALKING ALL OVER TOWN.
IT'S NOT A RIDDLE.
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
WHAT'S WRONG?
SOME STUFF?

ANYWAY, LET'S GO LOOK IN TOWN
EVERY-THING MAKES SEN?
EVERY-ONE IS SEN?
COME ON, GET READY TO GO!
IT'S LIKE A RIDDLE


BODY?
SEN'S BODY.


A BOOK WITH RIDDLES.
THEY READ US A BOOK.
So that's where you got the riddles.

YEAH, HERE.
YESTERDAY, YOU WERE FIRST HERE AT THIS PARK.
WE PLAYED HERE.

IT'S KURO-CHAN.
NIJUKU! SANJU!
THEN WE HEARD KURO-CHAN.
WE HAVE TO GO.

OH, THAT MOTHER AND HER SON.
WE MADE A FRIEND.

WE'LL READ YOU MORE THEN.
YOU CAN COME AGAIN TO-MORROW

YEAH.
CAN WE GO?
THEY'RE TELLING US TO COME OVER.

COULD THAT BE ME!?
...AND PUT IT BETWEEN THE PAGES OF THE BOOK.
AND SO WE PICKED UP A FLAPPY THING...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT PART.
Then I'll see you later...
GRUP

Let's find the others, quickly.
WELL, WE FOUND THE FIRST ONE.
I'm half glad...
...and sort of disappointed.
OH, IT'S JUST A LEAF.
I WONDER WHEN THEY GOT OUT OF THE COFFIN?
THIS NEVER HAPPENED.
I'm sure it was because someone left it open.
NO, IT WAS A MISUNDERSTANDING.
UM, DID YOU NEED SOMETHING?
YOU CAN'T PLAY TODAY?
NO BUT WE CAN TOMORROW.
I'M GOING TO THE BAR.
A BAT?
HAVE YOU SEEN ONE?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR A BAT THAT LOOKS LIKE THIS
HMM...
Well, I guess NIJUKU or SANJU opened it or something.
YEAH, HE FOUND A TOY IN THE PARK YESTERDAY.
IS THIS DOGGY CARRYING SOMETHING?
I THINK I SAW ONE SOMEWHERE...

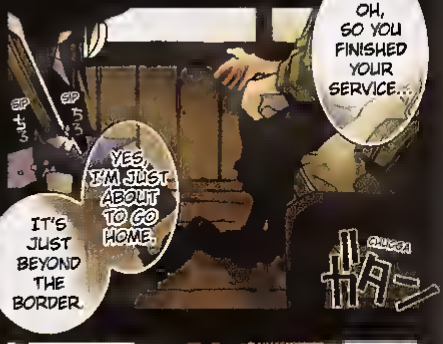
Hey, stop messing around.
OOPS.
KURO-CHAN.
LOTS OF STORES.
You and I went to the center of town
LEWIS
...more than your silly riddles.
I want to solve my case...
CAN YOU SOLVE IT?
WE'RE PLAYING WITH RIDDLES
ACTUALLY, WE DON'T HAVE TIME.
NOT NOW.
IT'S OKAY, I'LL GIVE YOU A HINT.
I HAVE ANOTHER RIDDLE FOR YOU.
IT LOOKS LIKE A SMALL ANIMAL WAS INSIDE MY CLOCK.
IT DOESN'T TALK, BUT IT'S ALWAYS SHAKING HANDS WITH PEOPLE. WHAT IS IT?
WHAT?
FLAP
OH NO!! THERE'S A LOAD OF BATS IN THE KITCHEN!!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO POINT IT OUT SO OBVIOUSLY.
WHERE DO A BIG PERSON AND A LITTLE PERSON CHASE AFTER EACH OTHER?

HOLD it.
YOU CAN'T CUT IT EVEN IF YOU USE SCISSORS OR A SWORD.
NEXT ONE.
I HOPE WE CAN FIND IT BEFORE IT GETS DARK.
It's already sunset.
I only need one more.
REALLY!?
...I'll give you one.
If you like riddles so much..
OH! DO I see a part of me coming on!?
A BIG DISCOV-ERY!
SEN!! SEN!!
But you hit something. What could it be?
You didn't use a hammer or a bat.
WHAT DID WE BREAK?
WHAT IS IT?
...WHICH ONE HAS MORE EARS?
AMONG NIJUKU AND SANJU...
WE JUST THOUGHT OF A GREAT RIDDLE!!
SEN, DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON THOSE TWO.
AAH!
EEK!
THE answer is "my nerve."
STOP MESSING AROUND!
I THINK IT'S BECAUSE HE ANSWERS THEM THAT THEY KEEP PROVIDING RIDDLES.
YOU GOT IT!!
When you convert your name to numbers...
...the "3" looks like an ear, right!?
It's Sanju, right!?

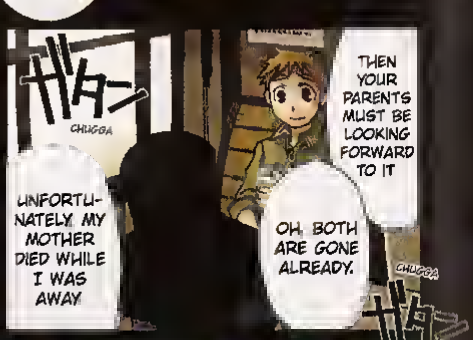
SO YOU GOT EV-ERYONE.
AND 1,000, INCLUDING ME!!
997, 998.
999.
DID YOU REALIZE SOME-THING?
HOLD ON A MINUTE.
HUH?
IT CAN'T BE USEFUL ALL THE TIME.
IT IS A CURSE, AFTER ALL.
IT HELPED US MANY TIMES...
...BUT IT'S A TROUBLE-SOME BODY
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE RIDDLE!?
SANJU.
WHICH ONE HAD MORE EARS?
THAT RIDDLE.
IT'S NOT THAT BAD.
BUT MY CURSE IS SIMPLE. IT'S JUST BROKEN INTO BITS OF BATS.
OH, THAT GAVE ME THE HINT.
WHY ARE YOU REVIEWING THEIR STUPID RIDDLE AT A TIME LIKE THIS!?
WE NEED TO FIND A CLUE SOON, OR...
BUT YOU HAVE A TIME LIMIT.
AH!!
OH!
HUH?
SINCE WHEN HAS NIJUKU HAD THREE EARS?

I WANT TO STAY AWAKE A LITTLE LONGER.
WHAT?
COME ON, YOU TWO. IT'S TIME TO SLEEP.
NO. LIE DOWN.
.....
"ONCE UPON A TIME...
...THERE WAS A TRAV-ELER."
IF YOU GET IT, WE'LL GO TO SLEEP.
WE'LL SLEEP IF WE CAN GIVE YOU A RIDDLE.
ONLY ONE, THEN.
"HE KEEPS WALKING FASTER THAN A HORSE FROM DAY TO NIGHT.
BUT HE STILL CAN'T REACH THE END OF HIS JOURNEY."
?
...EVEN IF YOU USE SCISSORS OR A SWORD?
WHAT'S THE THING YOU CAN'T CUT...
OH, another riddle?
WELL,
THE ANSWER TO THIS RIDDLE IS "THE SUN."
DID YOU JUST LOOK at me?
IS IT "A RELATION-SHIP"?
.....
...BUT I DO WANT TO END THE JOURNEY WITHOUT REGRETS.
I KNOW I HAVEN'T WALKED HALF THE PATH OF THE SUN...
IT'S A JOURNEY WE NEED TO HURRY WITH, BUT THERE'S NO RUSH.

CHUGGA
HM...
SO IT'S AN EMPTY HOME WITH NO ONE WAITING.
I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S ANY POINT IN GOING BACK.


SIP
SIP
OH, SO YOU FINISHED YOUR SERVICE...
YES, I'M JUST ABOUT TO GO HOME.
IT'S JUST BEYOND THE BORDER.
CHUGGA

I'M A TRAV-ELER...
...SO MAYBE THAT'S WHY I FEEL THIS WAY, BUT...
CHUGGA


CHUGGA
UNFORTU-NATELY, MY MOTHER DIED WHILE I WAS AWAY.
THEN YOUR PARENTS MUST BE LOOKING FORWARD TO IT
OH, BOTH ARE GONE ALREADY.
CHUGGA

...IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU'RE GOING "HOME"...
...THEN THAT MUST BE WHERE YOU BELONG.

HUH?
SEN.
WHERE ARE THE GIRLS?

HAVE A NICE JOURNEY.
IT WAS NICE TALKING TO YOU.
REMANTOL. REMANTOL.

WHOOOSH
HUH!? DOES THAT MEAN...
I JUST came outside to get fresh air.
KURO-CHA!

OH... NIJUKU? SANJU?
SEN?

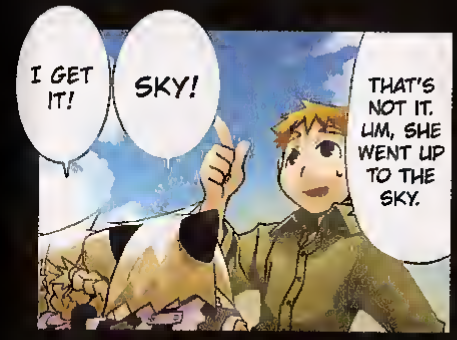
ガタン
CHUGGA
CHUGGA
ガタン

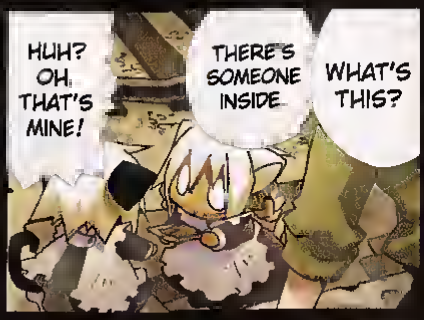
SHEESH. I TOLD HIM TO LOOK OUT FOR THE TWO
THAT'S WHY I ALLOWED THE WHISKEY.

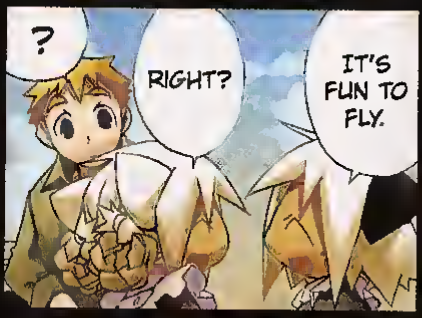
ガタン
CHUGGA
CHUGGA
CHUGGA
ガタン
ガタン

WOBBLE
WOBBLE
ISN'T THAT...
...YOUR COMPANION?

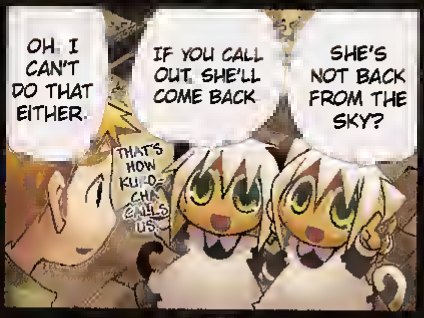
I GUESS I'M TOO NICE.
SIGH...
I LIKE "TRAIN."
ME TOO.
WHOA!? YOU GIRLS DIDN'T GET OFF!?
WHERE IS KURO-CHA?
WHERE ARE WE?
...USING MY TRAVEL FEE TO PAY FOR YOUR TICKETS
STRAYED?
STRAYED?
OH NO...DO YOU UNDER-STAND THAT YOU STRAYED FROM YOUR GUARDIAN?
CHUGGA
OR ELSE I CAN'T GO HOME.
I HAVE TO FIND THAT BLACK TRAVELER AND GET MY MONEY BACK.
RIGHT.
LOST?
WE'RE LOST?
LISTEN. YOU GUYS ARE LOST.
AHEM
WE ARE ABOUT TO REACH THE BORDER...
ANYWAY I SHOULD GET YOU OFF AT THE NEXT STATION...
CHUGGA
NOTICE
KIDS CAN BE SO CRUEL.
LOST! LOST!
YOU'RE LOST TOO?
WHAT'S A TICKET?
BY THE WAY...
...I WILL BE COMING BY TO CHECK YOUR TICKET AND VOUCHER.
CHUGGA
CHUGGA

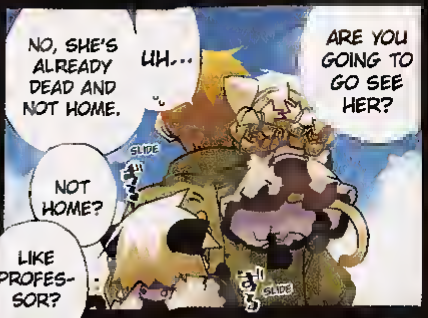

I GET IT!
SKY!
THAT'S NOT IT. UM, SHE WENT UP TO THE SKY.


HUH? OH, THAT'S MINE!
THERE'S SOMEONE INSIDE.
WHAT'S THIS?


?
RIGHT?
IT'S FUN TO FLY.

MY MOTHER.
WHO IS THIS?
THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE.
IT DROPPED WHEN I TOOK OUT MY WALLET.
WHEN SHE WAS REALLY YOUNG.
YOUNGER THAN ME.


OH. I CAN'T DO THAT EITHER.
IF YOU CALL OUT, SHE'LL COME BACK
SHE'S NOT BACK FROM THE SKY?
THAT'S HOW KUDOCHA CALLS US.


NO, SHE'S ALREADY DEAD AND NOT HOME.
UH...
ARE YOU GOING TO GO SEE HER?
NOT HOME?
LIKE PROFESSOR?
SLIDE
SLIDE

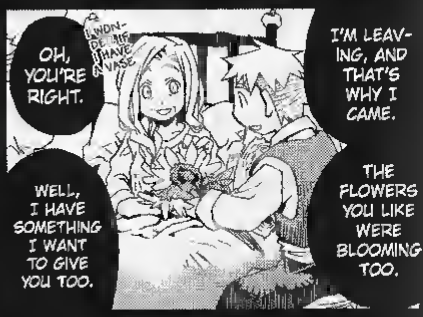
SHE'S AT A PLACE WHERE MY VOICE DOESN'T REACH

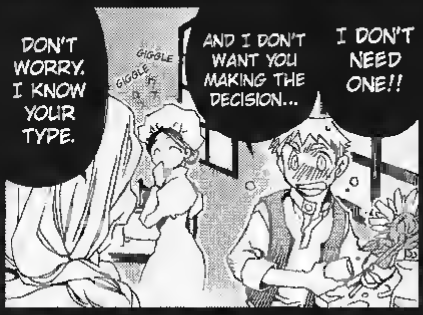
I GUESS I'M NOT GOOD WITH KIDS.
OUR CONVERSATION DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...
JUST LIKE US!
I KNOW! YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HER
YOU'RE A TRAVELER AND LOST!!

I'LL BE BACK WHEN THIS FLOWER BLOOMS AGAIN.
IT'S ONLY 12 MONTHS.
BUT IT'LL BE LONELY WITH-OUT YOU HERE.
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'RE RIGHT.

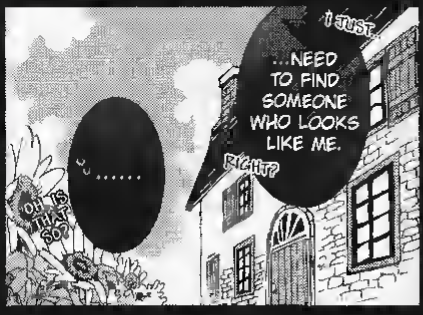
AREN'T YOU LEAVING FOR SERVICE TOMORROW?
MOM, HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO COME.

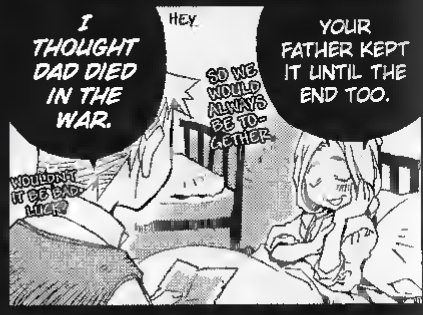
YOU NEVER HAVE GIRLS IN YOUR LIFE.
...I'LL FIND YOU A WIFE!
THEN BY THE TIME YOU COME BACK...
CRASH

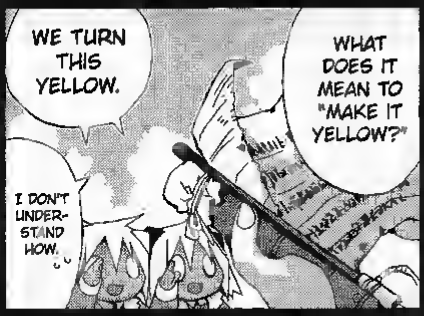

OH, YOU'RE RIGHT.
I'M LEAV-ING, AND THAT'S WHY I CAME.
WELL, I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO GIVE YOU TOO.
THE FLOWERS YOU LIKE WERE BLOOMING TOO.


DON'T WORRY. I KNOW YOUR TYPE.
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
AND I DON'T WANT YOU MAKING THE DECISION...
I DON'T NEED ONE!!

IT'S A PICTURE OF WHEN I WAS THE PRETTIEST
IT'S ALL WORN OUT.
WHAT'S THIS OLD PICTURE?
TAKE IT AS A LUCKY CHARM.


I JUST...
...NEED TO FIND SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE ME.
RIGHT?
U.....
OH, IS THAT SO?


I THOUGHT DAD DIED IN THE WAR.
HEY.
SO WE WOULD ALWAYS BE TO-GETHER.
YOUR FATHER KEPT IT UNTIL THE END TOO.
WOULDN'T IT BE BAD LUCK?


WE TURN THIS YELLOW.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "MAKE IT YELLOW?"
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW.

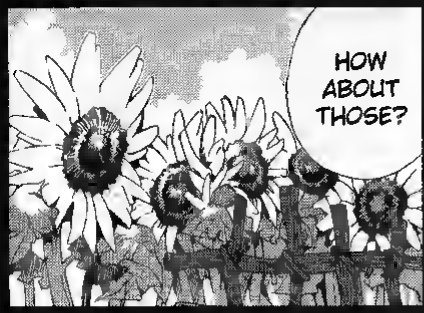
I SEE.
UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE NO MESSAGE FROM THE PERSON YOU ARE LOOKING FOR.
HEY! HEY!

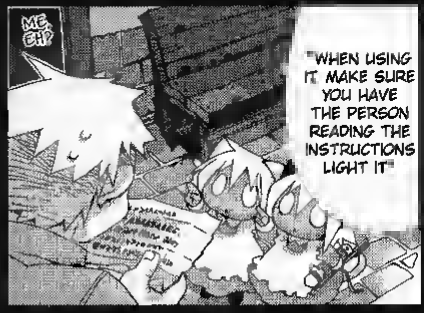
RIGHT.
WE JUST NEED TO GET THE COLOR FROM SOMETHING YELLOW.
??

KURO-CHAN GAVE THIS TO US.
HUH? WHOA!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
WE USE IT WHEN WE GET LOST.
BLUE SHOT

HUH? UM, LET'S SEE...
YELLOW. YELLOW.
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YELLOW?

"FOR EMERGENCIES, USE RED. WHEN LOST, USE YELLOW. FOR OTHERS, SHOOT UP A BLUE SHOT."
WHAT IS IT? A SIGNAL SHOT?


HOW ABOUT THOSE?


ME: EH?
"WHEN USING IT MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE PERSON READING THE INSTRUCTIONS LIGHT IT"

YEAH. I'M SURE THE TRAVELER NOTICED THAT.
WOULD THEY FIND US?

OKAY.
HERE GOES THE FIRST SHOT.

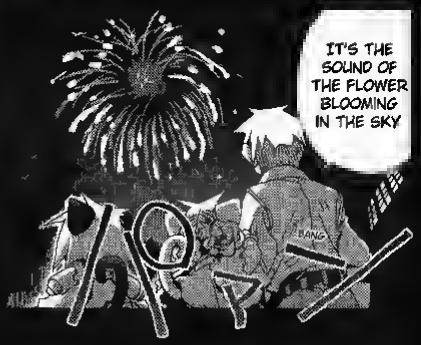
HUH? YOU HAVE ANOTHER GUARDIAN?
THAT EAT?
THERE'S ONE MORE.
NOT JUST KURO-CHAN.

SHUUUUW

THE PERSON YOU WERE LOOKING FOR.
NOT FOR US.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
WHAT WAS THAT!?
HAHA. DON'T WORRY.
LOOK AT THE SKY.

SHE'S LOST IN THE SKY, RIGHT?
SHE'S IN THE SKY, RIGHT?


IT'S THE SOUND OF THE FLOWER BLOOMING IN THE SKY
BANG

WHAT IS ALL OF THIS?
WHY ARE THERE SO MANY?
SEN CAME!
IT'S SEN.
There you are. I finally found you two.
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP

...SHE SHOULD COME BACK TO YOU.
IF SHE SEES THIS IN THE SKY...

SHE'S waiting in the other town.
She can't fly here.
WHERE IS KURO-CHAN?

THAT'S TRUE.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
RIGHT?

OF COURSE YOU'RE GOING TO GO GET THEM, RIGHT?
I SAW THE FIREWORKS BEHIND THAT MOUNTAIN.

HUH!? IT CAN'T BE...
SOME-THING'S COMING FROM THE SKY.
OH!

I have to take you back or SHE'S going to rip up my body one by one!!
SEN, WHY ARE—
HUH?
So come on, Let's go. Let's go now. Right now.
AND IT'S NOT JUST A TRIP-PATH!
ROLL
FLAP

SQUEAK
SQUEAK
FLAP

...I WAS HAVING A DREAM?
MAYBE...

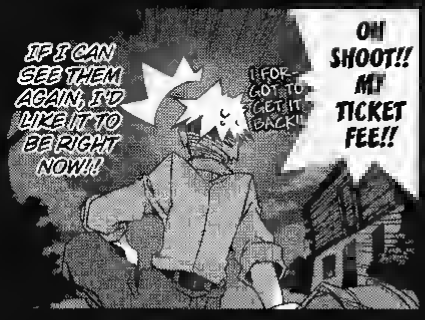
OKAY.
??
OH, but it's a trouble to pull you both.
So you girls need to fly too.

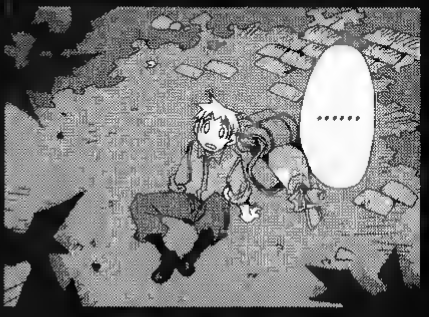
...AND THEY DIDN'T SAY THEY'D SEE ME LATER...
THERE WERE WEIRD KIDS...

!?

.....
...BUT WILL I SEE THEM AGAIN?

BYE-BYE!
BYE! SEE YOU LATER!

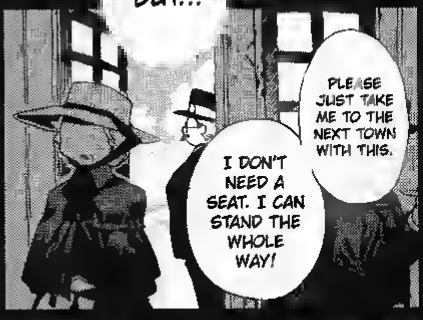

IF I CAN SEE THEM AGAIN, I'D LIKE IT TO BE RIGHT NOW!!
I FOR-GOT TO GET IT BACK!!
OH SHOOT!! MY TICKET FEE!!


.....

IT'S FINE. I'M JUST TRAVELING FOR FUN.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO GET TO YOUR DESTINATIO
ARE YOU SURE?
HUH? YES. OF COURSE.
TH- THANK YOU SO MUCH...

PLEASE!! I BEG YOU!
BUT...

!?
IT'S FINE.
YOU JUST LOOKED SO DISTRESSED.
CLATTER


PLEASE JUST TAKE ME TO THE NEXT TOWN WITH THIS.
I DON'T NEED A SEAT. I CAN STAND THE WHOLE WAY!

...AND SHE'LL COME BACK.
THE PLACE MUST BE IMPORTANT TO GO TO FOR YOU.
MAYBE SHE SAW IT IN THE SKY..
Y- YES...

I'M SURE YOU CAN FIT ME IN SOMEWHERE...
I CAN'T EVEN LET YOU RIDE ON THE LUGGAGE TRAIN WITH JUST THAT

THEN I CAN PAY YOU BACK.
I KNOW! THEN PLEASE COME TO MY HOMETOWN WITH ME.
OH! I'M NOT TRYING TO HIT ON YOU OR ANYTHING.

...USING THIS TICKET?
THEN CAN I PAY FOR HIM...
SLIDE
すっ

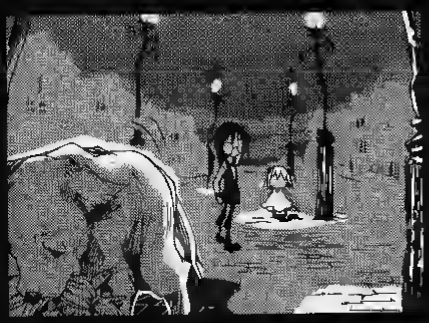
OH.
...
What are you doing?
?
I WAS JUST WONDERING.
About what?
THE SIZE OF THIS COFFIN.
It belonged to her, right?
I CHOSE THE SMALLEST ONE.
BACK THEN, THAT WAS ALL I COULD CARRY.
WOW, YOU'VE GOTTEN BIG.
LOOK, IT'S SO SMALL NOW.
...are you going to get rid of it?
If you live longer and can't fit in that coffin...
I DON'T KNOW.
I GUESS TIME WILL TELL.

...FOR IT TO BE DARK WHEN I OPENED MY EYES.
I THOUGHT IT WAS NORMAL...
"..."
"I CAN'T."
"YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SLEEP?"
"OH?"
"OUTSIDE."
"IF YOU CAN'T SLEEP, DO YOU WANT TO TAKE A WALK WITH ME?"
"THE [illegible] IS NICE TONIGHT."
"OKAY."

BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ
HOPEFULLY YOUR TRAVELS WILL HAVE GOOD THINGS.
I'LL GIVE IT TO THE YOUNG TRAVELERS.
IT'S SUPPOSED TO PROTECT YOU FROM BAD LUCK AND EVIL.
THIS IS A TRADITIONAL DOLL.
YOU TIE UP YOUNG TWIGS FROM THE SANBIKA TREE.
OKAY, LET'S GO.
If we go to the bridge over there, we can get away from the people.
WE HOLD HANDS AND DON'T STRAY!
GOOD.
Hey, What do you do when there are a lot of people?
SHEESH
IT'S A REALLY CROWDED TOWN.
Well, it wards off evil.
AND A WEIRD BODY.
WHAT A WEIRD FACE.
It can't have curly hair to do that.
YOU DROPPED IT ALREADY?
That was fast.
IT'S NOT HERE!
THE DOLL IS GONE.
YES.
Are the two still here?
PHEW, WE MADE IT.
BUT GONE.
WHICH IS IT?
BUZZ
BUZZ
BUZZ
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER

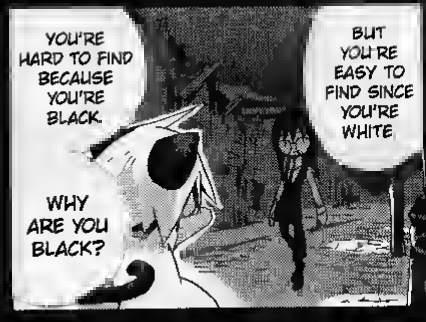
"THERE'S NO [illegible]"
"NOPE."
"THERE'S NO SOUND."
"YEAH, IT'S QUIET."
"YEAH, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT."
"....."
"THE [illegible]"
"THE 'TOWN' IS SLEEP-ING?"
"THEY'RE SLEEP-ING, LIKE SANJI."
"WHERE'D EVERYONE GO?"
"...ARE THE MOON, THE LIGHTS, AND US."
"THE [illegible] ONES AWAKE..."
"...EVERY-THING SHUTS [illegible] AT NIGHT."
"PEOPLE, STORES, CARRIAGES, STREETS..."
"WELL, MAYBE SOME OTHERS TOO."
"..."
FLOAT
FLOAT

"IT'S SO DARK AND NO ONE'S AROUND."
"AFRAID?"
"AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF NIGHT?"
"OH YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT."
"...AND THERE WAS NO ONE AROUND."
"BUT WE WERE ALWAYS IN THE DARK..."
"I [illegible] DAY-TIME."
"EVEN KURO-CHAN"
"EVERYONE IS AFRAID OF NIGHT?"
"PROBABLY."
"...YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING, BUT [illegible] CAN SEE EVERY-THING IN THE DARK."
"IN THE [illegible] WORLD..."
"LIGHT?"
"MAYBE BECAUSE WE KNOW LIGHT."
"WHY ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE DARK?"
"HMMM."
"...SO [illegible] WHY THEY'RE AFRAID."
"AND KIDS CAN SEE [illegible] BETTER..."

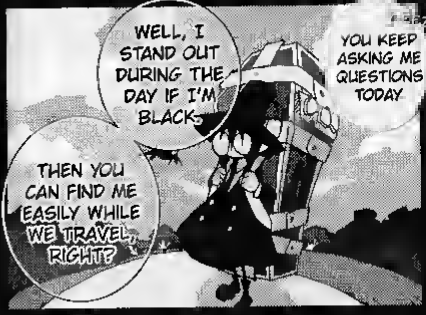


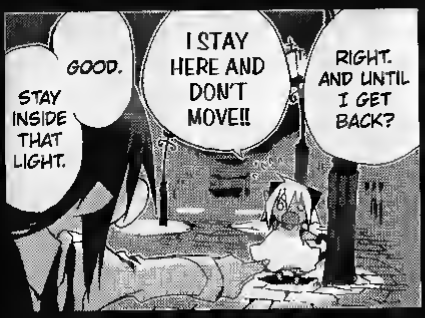
OVER THERE IS DARK.
DON'T GO TOO FAR.
THIS PLACE IS BRIGHT
YOU CAN GET LOST EASILY IN THE DARK

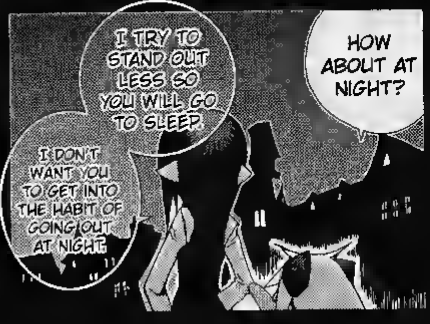
THE DOLL!
THAT DOG WAS HOLDING—


YOU'RE HARD TO FIND BECAUSE YOU'RE BLACK.
BUT YOU'RE EASY TO FIND SINCE YOU'RE WHITE
WHY ARE YOU BLACK?

I STAY HERE?
YOU STAY HERE.
I'LL GO CHECK IT OUT.


WELL, I STAND OUT DURING THE DAY IF I'M BLACK.
YOU KEEP ASKING ME QUESTIONS TODAY.
THEN YOU CAN FIND ME EASILY WHILE WE TRAVEL, RIGHT?

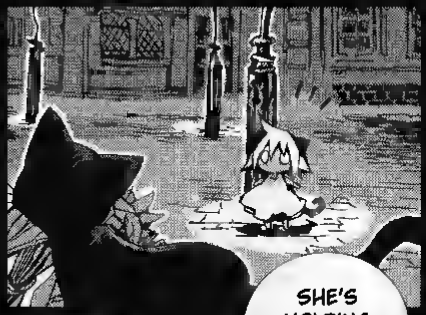

GOOD.
STAY INSIDE THAT LIGHT.
I STAY HERE AND DON'T MOVE!!
RIGHT. AND UNTIL I GET BACK?


I TRY TO STAND OUT LESS SO YOU WILL GO TO SLEEP.
HOW ABOUT AT NIGHT?
I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET INTO THE HABIT OF GOING OUT AT NIGHT.

BECAUSE YOU DROPPED ME.
THAT'S RIGHT.

?

WHERE...
...AM I?



SHE'S HOLDING THAT DOLL TOO!
WAIT!

WAIT!
HUH?

FOUND THE DOLL.
BUT ONLY THE LEGS.

KURO-CHA.

I CAN'T SEE ANY-THING.
BUT...
...I CAN SEE EVERY-THING.

BUT IT MIGHT BE MY FIRST TIME.
I THINK I PASSED BY HERE.

...IT'S DARK, AND I CAN'T TELL WHAT'S WHAT
KURO-CHA, WHERE ARE YOU?
KURO-CHA!
NO MATTER WHERE I LOOK...
—JUKU.

KURO-CHA!
NIJUKU?
WHERE ARE YOU?

IT'S OKAY!
I WAS ABOUT TO "DROP" YOU TOO.
I SEE.
OH, AND...
...I COULDN'T FIND THAT DOLL.

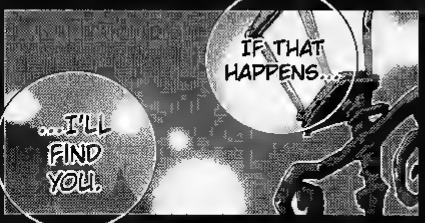
KURO...

WHY ARE YOU PITCH-BLACK?
HUH?
THAT QUES-TION AGAIN?

...CHA!!
WHOA!?

IT'S HARD...
...TO FIND YOU WHEN IT'S DARK.
YOU DON'T LIKE NIGHT-TIME WALKS ANYMORE?

YOU'RE BLACK, SO I CAN'T SEE!!
I CAN'T SEE YOU!!
WH—


IF THAT HAPPENS...
...I'LL FIND YOU.

OR I GET LOST!!
I HAVE TO HOLD HANDS!!
THAT'S WHY!
HUH? OKAY.
SOR-RY...?

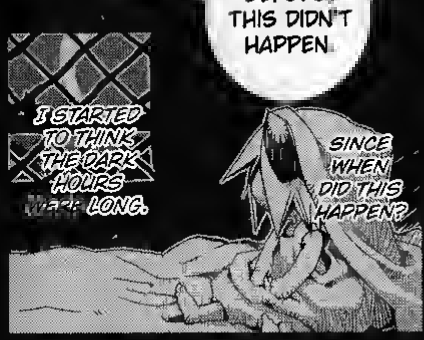
OKAY!!
DON'T GO ANYWHERE ON YOUR OWN AGAIN.
BUT I WON'T IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW INSTRUC-TIONS.

BUT I CAN'T SLEEP.
PROFESSOR SAID SO TOO.
WHEN IT'S DARK, IT'S TIME TO SLEEP.

YOU'RE NOT SLEEPING?
IN A BIT.
I HAVE TO GO GET MY IDIOT COMPANION.

...IT'S DARK. THAT'S NORMAL.
...EVEN WHEN I OPEN THEM...
EVEN WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES...

GOOD NIGHT.
GOOD NIGHT.

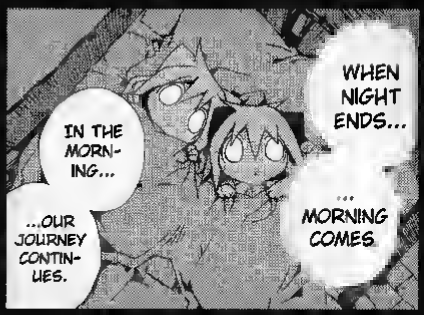

BEFORE THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN
I STARTED TO THINK THE DARK HOURS
SINCE WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

SWAT
ばたん

"...MAYBE THAT'S BECAUSE YOU KNOW LIGHT."
"WELL..."

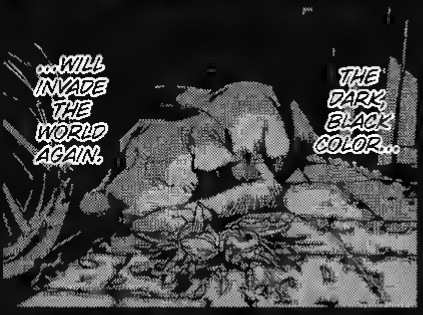
NOT FAIR.

EVENTUALLY THE MORNING I WAS WAITING FOR WILL COME.
...IS ONLY UP TO HERE.
THE INVASION OF THE STAIN...


WHEN NIGHT ENDS...
IN THE MORNING...
...OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES.
...MORNING COMES.

AND THE SUN WILL SET AGAIN.
...IT'S ALREADY UP TO HERE.
OR...

I WONDER IF TOMORROW WILL BE A GOOD DAY.
I HOPE SO.


...WILL INVADE THE WORLD AGAIN.
THE DARK, BLACK COLOR...

LEAVING ONLY THE SMALL, SHINING...
...SCATTERED STARS.

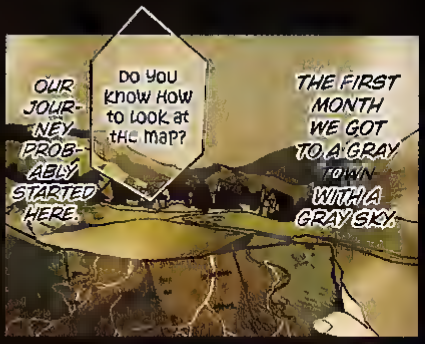
NOT YET.
AFTER WE LEAVE THE TOWN AND REACH THE FIELDS.
IT'S ANOTHER SUNNY DAY!!
CAN WE NOT WEAR CLOTHES TODAY?
...WONDERING ABOUT WHAT TOWN THE NEXT ONE WILL BE!
BUT!
I GET EXCITED...
REALLY?
ARE YOU SAD?
I'M SAD EVERY TIME WE LEAVE TOWN.
NOW IS THE SADDEST MOMENT.
WE WERE ONLY HERE A LITTLE BIT.
WE'RE LEAVING TOWN ALREADY?
THAT'S GOOD.
I SEE.
YEAH! IT'S FUN!
DO YOU GIRLS LIKE TRAVELING?
WE HAVE TO PICK UP THE BAT WITH A HANGOVER ON THE WAY TOO.
THEN...
...LET'S GET GOING.

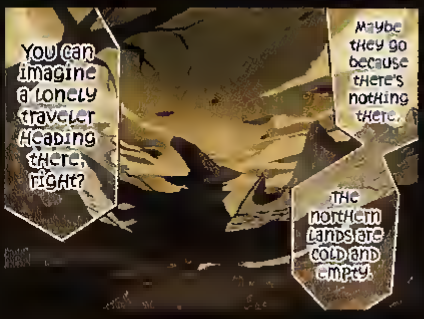
The girl snuck out af the mansian at dawn. The place was cavered in snaw.

She had na idea that her small bit af curiasity and her selfishness wauld bring such dreadful results.

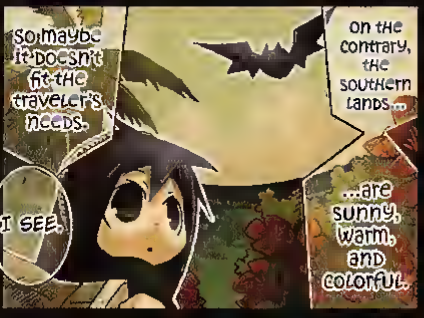
Look, that backpack is way too big for you.
I really think you shouldn't do this.
I don't think you can handle it.
Are you done saying good-bye?
I UNDER-STAND WHAT A "JOUR-NEY" IS.
DON'T MAKE FUN OF ME, SENSEI.
DO YOU want to go back?
NO, I DON'T.
A LITTLE BIT MORE.
JUST A BIT.
IT'S MUCH MORE WORK...
...THAN GOING TO JOHAN'S RANCH, OR GOING TO SANDYORE TOWN WITHOUT A HORSE, RIGHT?
...YOUR WORLD IS STILL SMALL.

REALLY? IS THERE ANYTHING IN THE NORTH?
USUALLY TRAVELERS GO NORTH, BUT WE'RE DOING THE OPPOSITE...
...AND STARTING FROM THE NORTH.
NO.

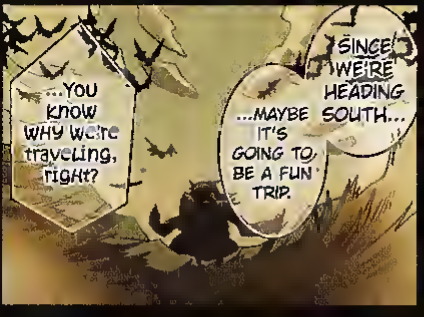

OUR JOURNEY PROBABLY STARTED HERE.
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO LOOK AT THE MAP?
THE FIRST MONTH WE GOT TO A GRAY TOWN WITH A GRAY SKY.


YOU CAN IMAGINE A LONELY TRAVELER HEADING THERE, RIGHT?
MAYBE THEY GO BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING THERE.
THE NORTHERN LANDS ARE COLD AND EMPTY.

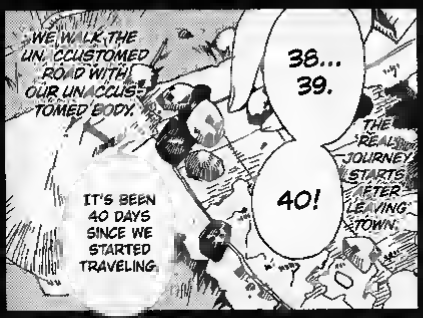
YOU CAN READ THE NAMES OF THE AREAS SURROUNDING IT, RIGHT?
THE SMALL THING AT THE TOP IS THAT TOWN.
UMMMM.


SO MAYBE IT DOESN'T FIT THE TRAVELER'S NEEDS.
ON THE CONTRARY, THE SOUTHERN LANDS...
...ARE SUNNY, WARM, AND COLORFUL.
I SEE.

HUH? YOU BROUGHT THOSE GLASSES?
I CAN'T.
I THOUGHT IF I USED THESE I COULD READ ANYTHING, LIKE YOU.


...YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE TRAVELING, RIGHT?
SINCE WE'RE HEADING SOUTH...
...MAYBE IT'S GOING TO BE A FUN TRIP.

DON'T SPEAK LIKE I'M DEAD.
YEAH.
I KNOW I'M NOT HUMAN ANYMORE.
AS PROOF THAT YOU WERE HUMAN.


WE WALK THE UN-CCUSTOMED ROAD WITH OUR UN-ACCUS-TOMED BODY.
IT'S BEEN 40 DAYS SINCE WE STARTED TRAVELING.
38... 39.
40!
THE REAL JOURNEY STARTS AFTER LEAVING TOWN.

THIS IS THE LAST OF WHAT WE'VE SEEN BEFORE.
HERE YOU GO. CAN OF SARDINES AND BREAD.
THANK YOU, MAY-SAN.
THE FIRST MONTH WE WERE IN A TOWN WITH WHITE MIST NEAR A LAKE.

WE'RE ABOUT TO ENTER THE BORDER OF A DIFFERENT COUNTRY.
RIGHT, SENSEI?
IT'S BEEN THAT LONG SINCE WE TURNED THIS WAY.

NO, I HAVE A GIRL WHO COMES HERE OFTEN.
...? THAT'S ODD.
WAS THAT NOT ENOUGH TO PAY FOR IT?

WHAT!? AGAIN?
There's only 40! We have to go back!
38... 39.
40!

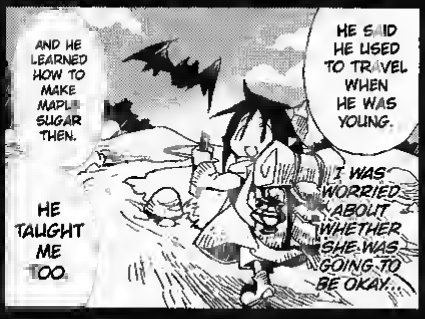
R-REALLY?
YOU REMIND ME OF HER.
IT'S WEIRD BECAUSE YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE HER AT ALL.

YOU HAVE TO GET USED TO THAT BODY OR WE CAN'T MOVE FORWARD.
All because that damn witch cut up my body into 1,000 pieces!!
I only have 940!! I left 60 of them in that forest!
FLAP FLAP FLAP FLAP

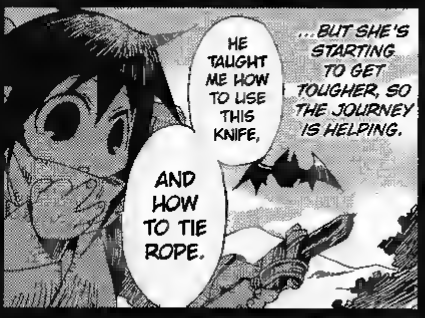
HIS SLY-LOOKING FACE REMINDS ME OF THE CRANKY MAN WHO LIVES IN THE NORTH-ERN TOWN.
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE OF YOUR BAT.
OH, I SEE.

LOOK! A MAN GAVE ME A KNIFE.
THAT'S NICE.

WE FOUND A POSITIVE SIDE TO BEING A KID TRAVELER.
OH, YOU'RE TRAVELING!?
YOU'RE NOT HERE TO RUN ERRANDS FOR YOUR MOTHER?
THE SECOND MONTH WAS PAST THE BORDER AND IN A TOWN WITH HAY ROOFS.

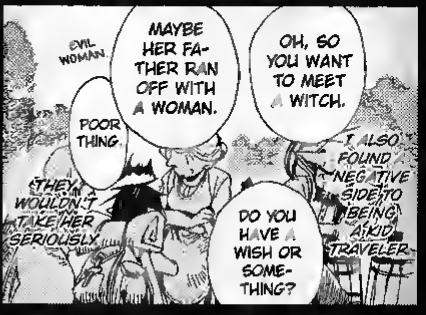

HE SAID HE USED TO TRAVEL WHEN HE WAS YOUNG.
AND HE LEARNED HOW TO MAKE MAPLE SUGAR THEN.
I WAS WORRIED ABOUT WHETHER SHE WAS GOING TO BE OKAY...
HE TAUGHT ME TOO.

YOU CAN STAY WITH ME TONIGHT
HOW TOUGH. YOU'RE SO YOUNG.
BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO HELP ME MAKE SUGAR.
POOR THING.
WELL, SHE'S A SMALL GIRL.
UNKNOWN TOWNS AND PEOPLE WOULD ACCEPT HER EASILY.

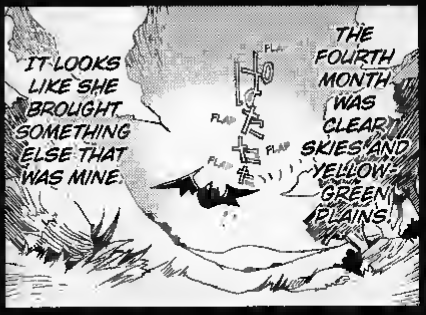

HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO USE THIS KNIFE,
...BUT SHE'S STARTING TO GET TOUGHER, SO THE JOURNEY IS HELPING.
AND HOW TO TIE ROPE.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE BLACK WITCH WENT?
OH YEAH.
HEY, DON'T FORGET OUR OBJECTIVE.

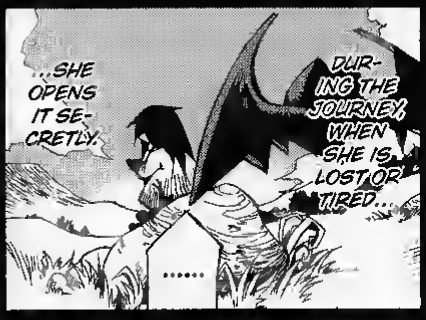
AND MY POSITION IS GETTING MORE DANGEROUS AT THE SAME TIME.
HE SAID SNAKES AND BATS ARE DELICIOUS.
ALSO HOW TO MAKE DRIED MEAT


EVIL WOMAN.
MAYBE HER FATHER RAN OFF WITH A WOMAN.
OH, SO YOU WANT TO MEET A WITCH.
POOR THING.
I ALSO FOUND A NEGATIVE SIDE TO BEING A KID TRAVELER.
THEY WOULDN'T TAKE HER SERIOUSLY.
DO YOU HAVE A WISH OR SOMETHING?

DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND BUILDINGS MAKE US FEEL THAT WE ARE IN A DIFFERENT COUNTRY.
We should buy necessities here.
We finally reached a big town.
THE FIFTH MONTH WAS IN A LARGER TOWN.


IT LOOKS LIKE SHE BROUGHT SOMETHING ELSE THAT WAS MINE.
FLAP
THE FOURTH MONTH WAS CLEAR SKIES AND YELLOW-GREEN PLAINS.

What? Already?
...WE'RE OUT OF MONEY.
BUT SENSEI ...


...SHE OPENS IT SECRETLY.
DURING THE JOURNEY, WHEN SHE IS LOST OR TIRED...
.....

.....
In a big town like this, they won't hire you for labor.
Hmm, that's not good.

HEY, GIVE IT BACK!!
THIS is my cigarette case!!
I knew it!!
WHAT!!

HUH? WHY?
LET'S GO SOMEWHERE WHERE THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE
I THOUGHT OF SOME THING!

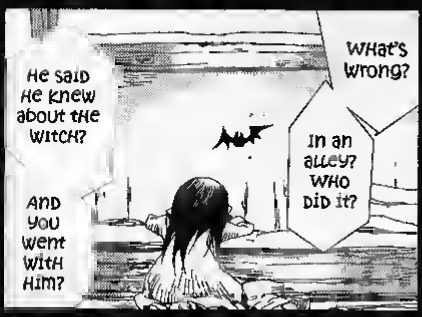
I WAS EATING IT A BIT AT A TIME!!
IT GIVES ME ENERGY.
WHY is it filled with rock candy!?
Hey, wait!!

WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET BY WITH THIS...
DID YOU BUY MY ALCOHOL?
OH, YOU'RE BACK.
THANKS TO MY LOVELY PERFORMANCE, WE GOT ENOUGH MONEY.
CLICK

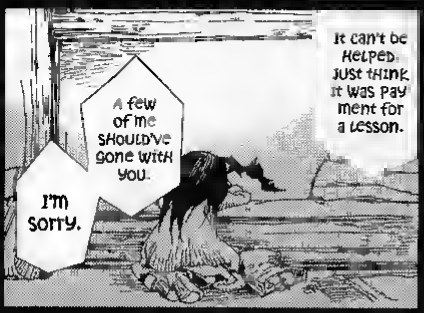
LOOK AT THE TRICKS WITH A THOUSAND BATS.
GATHER AROUND AND LOOK.
FLAP
BUZZ

...BUT I GUESS IT WASN'T THAT EASY.

I SEE, YOU'RE DOING TRICKS.
BUT I'M DOING ALL THE WORK. YOU'RE JUST STANDING
SHH!

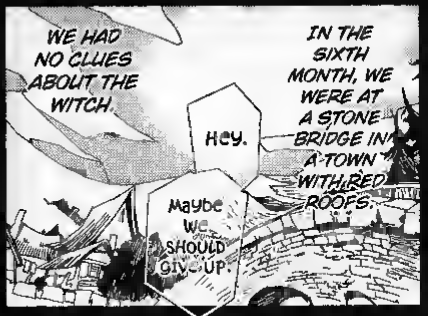

WHAT'S WRONG?
HE SAID HE KNEW ABOUT THE WITCH?
IN AN ALLEY? WHO DID IT?
AND YOU WENT WITH HIM?

OOOOH!
WOW. HOW DID YOU KNOW?
IS THIS HAT YOURS?
LIPS MOVING


I'M SORRY.
A FEW OF ME SHOULD'VE GONE WITH YOU.
IT CAN'T BE HELPED. JUST THINK IT WAS PAYMENT FOR A LESSON.

SHH.
SEN-SEI!!
?
WE'LL TAKE WHATEVER YOU CAN AFFORD TO GIVE US.
WE'LL ALSO TAKE A KISS FROM A BEAUTIFUL LADY.

SHE PROBABLY RAN OUT OF ROCK CANDY.
BY THE NINTH MONTH, SHE GOT QUIETER.
I'M HUNGRY.


WE HAD NO CLUES ABOUT THE WITCH.
IN THE SIXTH MONTH, WE WERE AT A STONE BRIDGE IN A TOWN WITH RED ROOFS.
Hey.
Maybe we SHOULD GIVE UP.

MY LEGS ARE WOBBLY.
SHE STOPPED CRYING.
...BUT ALSO STOPPED SMILING TOO.

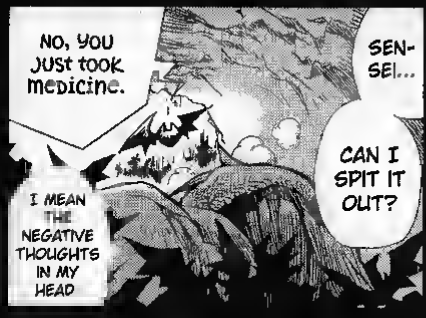
IF OUR APPEARANCES WEREN'T THIS DIFFERENT...
...WE MIGHT EVEN HAVE THOUGHT THE WITCH INCIDENT WAS A DREAM.
It's a waste of time now.
YOU THINK?

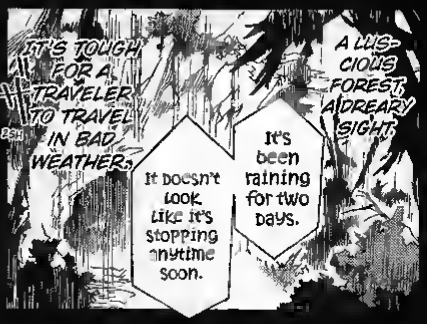
...'KAY.
Try it.
"Darn it, I ate so much yesterday that I have a hard time walking today."

YOU'RE A TRAVELER, YET SO IMPATIENT.
IT'S PART OF THE FUN TO WAIT AND WATCH YOUR OPPONENT'S MOVEMENTS.
But...
OH!

Hey... Wait!!
I DON'T FEEL DIZZY, I DON'T HAVE CHILLS
MY HEAD IS HURTING PROBABLY BECAUSE THE WIND IS COLD.
If you're feeling sick, then tell me!!
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
ABOUT A CLIMB MOUNTAIN

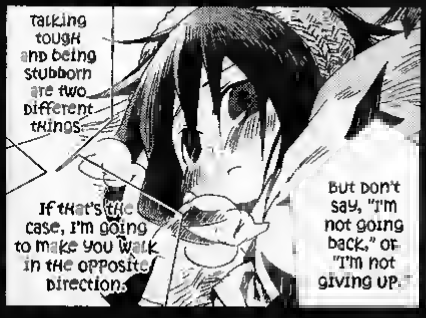
NOPE, FAILED AGAIN.
SPLOOSH
YOU'RE MORE IMPATIENT THAN HER.
Hey, are you sure we can fish here!?

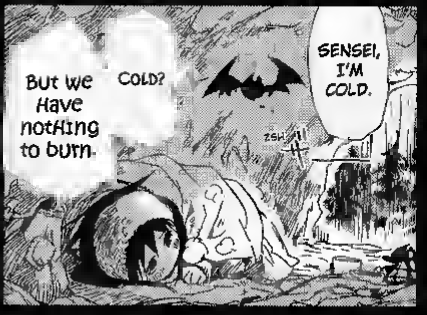

NO, YOU JUST TOOK MEDICINE.
I MEAN THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS IN MY HEAD
SEN-SEI...
CAN I SPIT IT OUT?

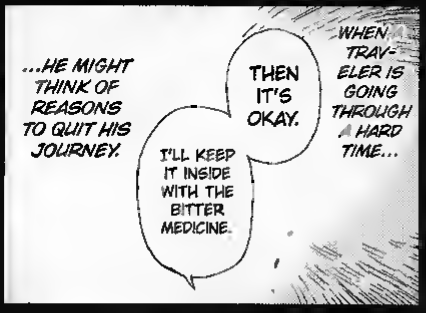

IT'S TOUGH FOR A TRAVELER TO TRAVEL IN BAD WEATHER.
ZSH
It doesn't look like it's stopping anytime soon.
It's been raining for two days.
A LUSCIOUS FOREST, A DREARY SIGHT.

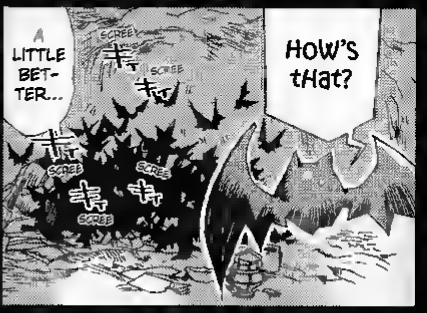
If it makes you feel better, I don't care what you say.
OH, THAT.
YOU TOLD ME YESTER-DAY...
...THAT I CAN ONLY TALK TOUGH.

We can't move in this weather, so take your time and rest.
Fortu-nately your fever is gone.


Talking tough and being stubborn are two different things.
If that's the case, I'm going to make you walk in the opposite direction.
But don't say, "I'm not going back," or "I'm not giving up."


But we have nothing to burn.
COLD?
SENSEI, I'M COLD.
ZSH


...HE MIGHT THINK OF REASONS TO QUIT HIS JOURNEY.
I'LL KEEP IT INSIDE WITH THE BITTER MEDICINE.
THEN IT'S OKAY.
WHEN A TRAV-ELER IS GOING THROUGH A HARD TIME...


A LITTLE BET-TER...
SCREE
SCREE
SCREE
SCREE
SCREE
HOW'S THAT?

weird rumors?
A BLACK WITCH? NO, NEVER HEARD OF HER.
BUT I'VE BEEN HEARING WEIRD RUMORS FROM THE EAST.

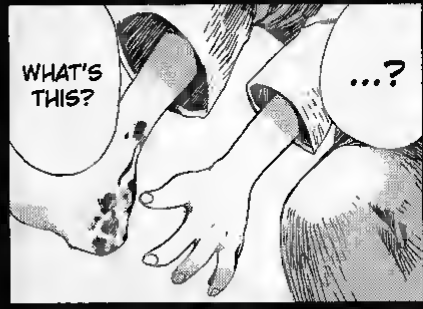
OH MY... YOU CLIMBED THE MOUNTAIN IN THIS SEASON?
YOU'RE SO YOUNG.
I'M GLAD IT WAS BEFORE THE SNOW CAME.
ZSHHHH

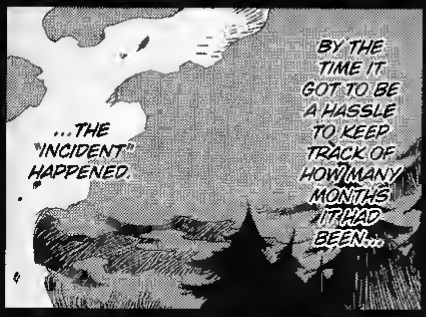
OH, YOU MUST'VE BEEN COLD.
COME NEAR THE FIRE AND WARM UP.

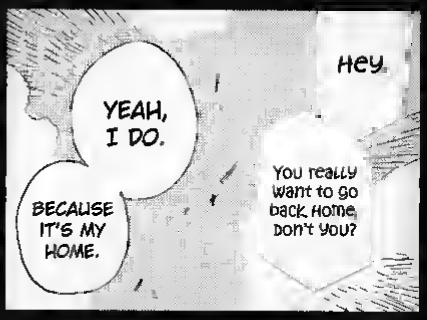
TH-THANK YOU.
WEAR THESE UNTIL YOURS ARE DRY.
I HAVE SOME CLOTHES FROM WHEN MY DAUGHTER WAS YOUNG

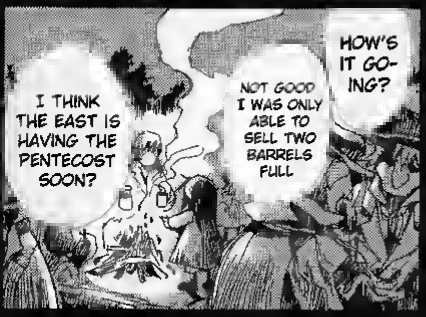
It's been awhile. It's a little old, but it's your favorite white clothes.
You're wearing girly clothes.

...ON ME ANYMORE.
THESE DON'T LOOK GOOD...


WHAT'S THIS?
...?


...THE "INCIDENT" HAPPENED.
BY THE TIME IT GOT TO BE A HASSLE TO KEEP TRACK OF HOW MANY MONTHS IT HAD BEEN...


Hey.
You really want to go back home, don't you?
YEAH, I DO.
BECAUSE IT'S MY HOME.

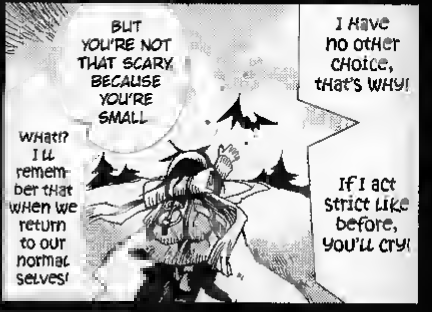

HOW'S IT GOING?
NOT GOOD I WAS ONLY ABLE TO SELL TWO BARRELS FULL
I THINK THE EAST IS HAVING THE PENTECOST SOON?

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO STOP TRAVELING.
I see.
THAT'S WHAT I DECIDED.
You've gotten stronger.

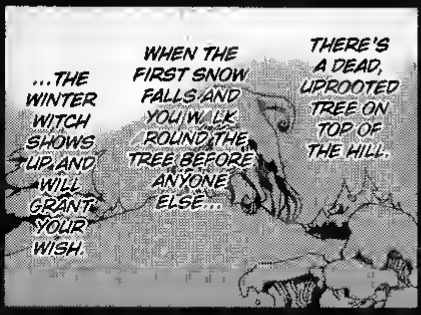
OH, YOU SHOULDN'T GO EAST.
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ABOUT "DEATH TOWN?"

YOU'VE BECOME NICER SINCE WE STARTED TRAVELING
THE OLD YOU...
...WOULD NEVER SAY, "SORRY," OR, "IT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU."

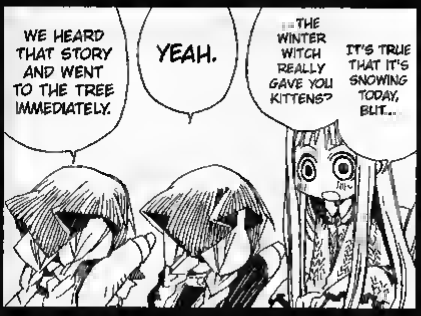
I HEAR THE DEVIL CAME...
...AND CURSED THE ENTIRE TOWN.


I have no other choice, that's why!
BUT YOU'RE NOT THAT SCARY, BECAUSE YOU'RE SMALL
If I act strict like before, you'll cry!
What!? I'll remember that when we return to our normal selves!

I'M THE SMARTEST AND CUTEST GIRL IN TOWN.
I'M MO. I'M NINE YEARS OLD.
AND I GET MAD A LOT.
I'M THE MOST SELFISH IN TOWN.
SO I AM SECOND-MOST IMPORTANT.
MY FATHER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN THIS TOWN. THE MAYOR.
MAY! I TOLD YOU NOT TO LET THEM INTO MY ROOM!!
WHY ARE YOU TWO IN MY ROOM!?
ECK!
KICK
KICK
AND...
IT'S MY FIRST DIARY, SO I NEED TO WRITE DOWN THE IMPORTANT STUFF.
DID I HAVE ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY?


...THE WINTER WITCH SHOWS UP AND WILL GRANT YOUR WISH.
WHEN THE FIRST SNOW FALLS AND YOU WALK ROUND THE TREE BEFORE ANYONE ELSE...
THERE'S A DEAD, UPROOTED TREE ON TOP OF THE HILL.

I SAID I'M NOT TALKING TO EITHER OF YOU ANYMORE.
YOU GIRLS ARE SO DUMB.
LET'S PLAY.
MO-NEE-CHAN, WE CAME TO PLAY.


WE HEARD THAT STORY AND WENT TO THE TREE IMMEDIATELY.
YEAH.
...THE WINTER WITCH REALLY GAVE YOU KITTENS?
IT'S TRUE THAT IT'S SNOWING TODAY, BUT...

OH! KITTENS!
KIT-TENS!
TODAY WE HAVE THESE KIT-TENS.
MEW!
MEW!
MEW!
MEW!

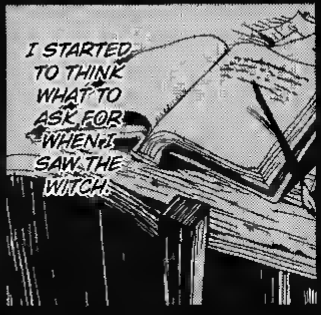
WE ONLY GOT TWO, SO THERE'S NONE FOR YOU.
...AND ASKED US IF WE WANTED SOME NEWBORN KITTENS.
...THE LADY FROM THE FARM IN THE SOUTH CALLED US OVER...
BUT ON THE WAY..
MEW!
MEW!

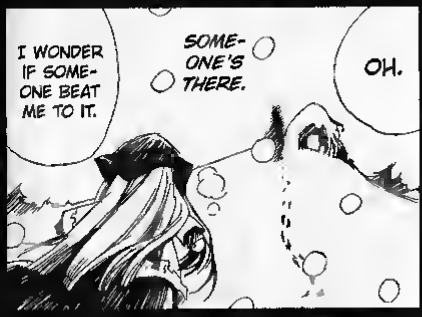
HEE HEE HEE.
SHE FELL FOR IT
I WANT ONE TOO!
WHERE DID YOU FIND THEM? DID SOMEONE GIVE THEM TO YOU?

I'M REALLY NOT TALKING TO YOU TWO ANYMORE.
GET OUT.
YOU JUST CAME TO SHOW IT OFF.
OKAY.
THAT'S IT.

WINTER WITCH?
DO YOU KNOW...
...THE STORY ABOUT THE WINTER WITCH?

I DIDN'T WANT THE TWO TO FIND ME.
I LEFT EARLY THAT MORNING.


I STARTED TO THINK WHAT TO ASK FOR WHEN I SAW THE WITCH.
THE 12TH MONTH IS THE MONTH WHEN THE SUN DIES.


I WONDER IF SOMEONE BEAT ME TO IT.
SOMEONE'S THERE.
OH.

ALL THE CANDY IN TOWN.
NEW CLOTHES FOR MY DOLL.
BUT IF I EAT IT ALL, IT WILL BE GONE.
NO, I DON'T WANT TO WASTE MY WISH ON THAT.

A BIG DOLLHOUSE IN RED AND GREEN.
THREE KITTENS.
I WANT TO BE AN ADULT NOW.

THAT'S NO ONE FROM THE TOWN.
I WAS SMART, SO I REALIZED IT SOON.

MAYBE I COULD ASK FOR A HUNDRED WISHES.
AND THAT WOULD BE MY WISH.
.....
.....

A WITCH?
.....
SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE CAME FROM THE MIDPOINT BETWEEN DREAM AND REALITY.
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO DESCRIBE IT.
.....
THEN I CAN USE MAGIC ANYTIME I WANT.
YES. JUST LIKE YOU.
...WATCHING SHADOW ART MADE OF SNOW.
IT WAS LIKE...
YOU WANT.
...TO BECOME LIKE ME?
SO THIS IS WHAT I SAID.
I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE WITCH AT ONCE.
FINE.
THEN I'LL GRANT YOUR WISH.
...INTO A WITCH?
CAN YOU MAKE ME...

AND MORE APPEARED AS TIME PASSED.
...WOULDN'T COME OFF EVEN IF MAY WASHED ME.
THE BLACK SPOTS ON MY BODY...

.....
.....?

SHE TOLD HIM EVERYTHING I'D TOLD HER, EXCEPT THE PART ABOUT THE WITCH.
MAY WAS WORRIED AND TOLD MY FATHER

WAS IT A DREAM?
...HUH?

OF COURSE HE WOULD I'M HIS PRECIOUS ONLY DAUGHTER.
THE NEXT DAY, MY FATHER SENT HORSES TO THE TOWN.

FWAP
"PUMPKIN CARRIAGE, APPEAR!!"
.....

AND THEN...

...AT THE LARGE WINDMILL AT THE EDGE OF TOWN.
THE TOWNSPEOPLE GATHERED...
THE FIRST MONTH IS WHEN THE SUN COMES BACK.

...AND MEN IN WHITE.
...I WAS INSPECTED BY MEN IN BLACK...

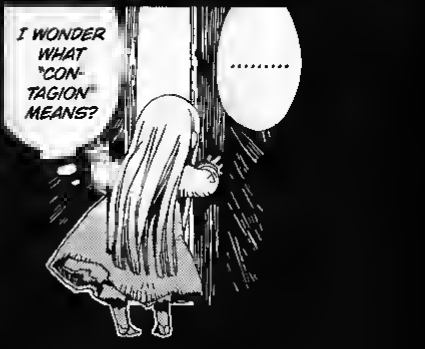
WHY? I TAKE BATHS OFTEN.
CLEAN?
I HEAR WE'RE GOING TO CLEAN OUR BODIES.
MONEE-CHAN!
OH!
ガヤ
ガヤ

I KNEW WHAT KIND OF FACES THEY WOULD MAKE...
...WHEN I TOLD THEM THAT.
I TOLD THEM ABOUT THE WITCH TOO.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR CHEEK?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR HANDS?
HEY. I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU!
HUH? OH. THE WITCH...

...TALKING TO THE MAN IN BLACK WHO LOOKED MOST IMPORTANT.
MY FATHER....

...I WAS PLAYING AT THE FIREPLACE AND FELL AND GOT DIRTY!!
I MEAN...
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE CLEANING UP.
I SEE.


I WONDER WHAT "CONTAGION" MEANS?
.....

THE MEN IN WHITE CAME OVER...
...AND TOOK AWAY EVERYONE SLEEPING.
IT'S OBVIOUS, BUT MY BODY WAS THE SAME.
THE SECOND MONTH IS WHEN THE GODDESS PREPARES SPRING.
I WONDER IF THEY'RE GOING TO INSPECT THEM LIKE THEY DID ME.
AND SINCE THEY DIRTIED MY CLOTHES, I COULDN'T WEAR MY FAVORITE OUTFITS.
THE BLACK SPOTS INCREASED.
...IT'S WEIRD TODAY.
BUT...
...I'LL PLAY WITH THEM FOR A BIT.
WHEN THEY COME BACK...
...IS EVERYONE SLEEPING?
WHA...

...SOMEONE CAME TO TOWN.
IT LOOKS LIKE NO ONE IS HERE.
THAT WAS WHEN...
SENSEI.
BUT NO ONE FROM TOWN CAME BACK, NOR DID THE MEN IN BLACK.
THE THIRD MONTH IS WHEN THE SUN EXPOSES ITSELF.
Be careful.
It might be a contagious disease.
AFTER THAT, ONE BY ONE, THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN WERE GONE.
I FINALLY REALIZED WHAT "DEATH" IS.
...AND A GIRL..
SHE WAS AROUND MY AGE...
...BECAUSE MAY ISN'T HERE.
I CAN'T CHANGE MY CLOTHES PROPERLY...
...DESPITE MY HUMILIATION, SHE STARTED TO TAKE CARE OF ME.
AND A FEW DAYS AFTER THIS...
...WHY WE WEAR BLACK TO FUNERALS
I WONDER...
WHY CAN'T WE WEAR LIME GREEN VELVET DRESSES?

...WAS WHAT A WEIRD TOWN...
IT'S LIKE A CEMETERY.
THE FIRST THING I THOUGHT WHEN I ENTERED THE TOWN
THE FIRST
...A MYSTERIOUS GIRL SHOWED UP...
THAT'S WHEN...
I see. It's a dead town indeed.
THERE ARE MANY COFFINS HERE
AND ASKED US TO HELP HER WITH HER WEIRD CEREMONY.
I'M HOLDING A FUNERAL.
IF YOU'RE BORED, CAN YOU HELP?
We're looking for a witch, though.
GHOSTS WON'T SHOW UP, RIGHT?
HEY.

THOSE ARE EMPTY.
IT'S FOR THE PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T COME BACK.
YOU SAID FUNERAL. SO I THOUGHT YOU MEANT FOR ALL THE COFFINS.

YES.
EVER SINCE TWO DAYS AGO.
ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE IN THIS TOWN?

SORRY, SENSEI.
YUCK
I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD BE TAKING CARE OF THE DEAD AT A PLACE LIKE THIS.
WE CAME TO A HORRIBLE TOWN.

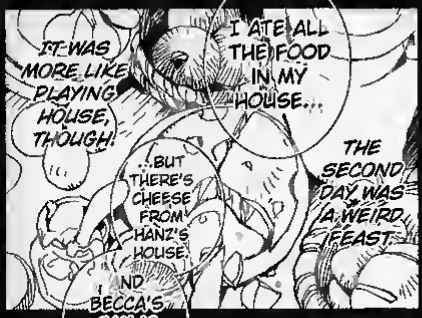
IT'S A FUNERAL.
YOU HAVE TO.
UM...
...DO I HAVE TO WEAR BLACK?

I CAN'T DO MANY THINGS ON MY OWN.
THANKS TO YOU GUYS I THINK I CAN SEND THEM TO THE OTHER WORLD.

WH—
WHAT?
I CAN'T TAKE THIS OFF
I SEE.

AND YOU DO THE OTHER RANDOM PARTS.
I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD HAVE TO PLAY HOUSE HERE TOO.
...SO YOU'RE THE SAD RELATIVES.
ALL RIGHT
I'LL BE THE PRIEST...

CAN I SAY THE SAME THING ABOUT YOU?
.....
SLAP
SLAP
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A GHOST AT FIRST.
GOOD, YOU'RE NOT TRANS-PARENT.
THE BAT WAS TALKING, SO...


I ATE ALL THE FOOD IN MY HOUSE...
IT WAS MORE LIKE PLAYING HOUSE, THOUGH!
...BUT THERE'S CHEESE FROM HANZ'S HOUSE.
AND BECCA'S JAM IS GOOD TOO.
THE SECOND DAY WAS A WEIRD FEAST.

You can take that off.
OH YEAH.
HUH? I CAN?

I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD GET SO MUCH FOOD...
...IN A GHOST TOWN.
THANKS.
YOU'RE PRETTY CHEERFUL EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE ALONE.

WHEN I LOOKED AT THE CORPSES THEY DIDN'T HAVE SIGNS OF CONTAGION.
SO I GUESS THEY DIDN'T DIE OF A DISEASE
WELL, I CAN'T SAY FOR SURE.

I GUESS.
EVER SINCE YOU CAME, I DON'T HAVE "ATTACKS."
AT-TACKS?

I'M CONCERNED ABOUT HER.
SHE LOOKS THE MOST DEAD, BUT SHE'S THE ONLY ONE ALIVE.

BY THE WAY,
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
AH!
WE FORGOT BECAUSE YOU KEPT US BUSY.

WHAT'S UP WITH HER?
HOW DID SHE TURN OUT LIKE THAT?

I FELT BAD ABOUT LEAVING THE TOWN.
IF WE LEAVE...
...SHE'S GOING TO BE ALONE AGAIN.
I SEE...
YOU GUYS ARE LOOKING FOR THE BLACK WITCH.
But our business is done.
I know what you want to say.
But if we miss the witch, there's no point to our journey
...AND I HAVE A CURSE OF THESE BLACK SPOTS.
YOU HAVE A CURSE THAT CHANGED YOUR APPEARANCES...
!?
AHHH!
Hmm.
...AND I HAVEN'T SEEN THE WITCH SINCE.
BUT I'VE LOOKED MANY, MANY TIMES...
HMM
IT MIGHT BE FUN TO TAG ALONG.
please don't.
THEN DO YOU WANT TO START A JOURNEY TOO?
please don't.

MO WAS HOLDING THIS WHEN SHE FELL DOWN THE STAIRS.
IT HAS DIFFICULT WORDS...
...AND REGION-SPECIFIC SPELLING, AND I CAN'T READ ALL OF IT.
I WAS IN A HURRY,
SO I FORGOT.
THE BLACK PARTS OF MY BODY...
...SOMETIMES GO AGAINST MY WILL.
BUT IT'S ASKING A PERSON NAMED MAY...
...TO TAKE CARE OF MO.
I see.
IT'S OKAY IF I DON'T HAVE LEGS.
I DON'T HAVE ANYONE TO KICK ANYWAY.
BUT ...
IT'S OKAY!
It's not...
...that he didn't love her.
Forget it. There's nothing we can say now.
Give her time.
.....
BEEP
But he chose "responsibility" over her.
That's all.

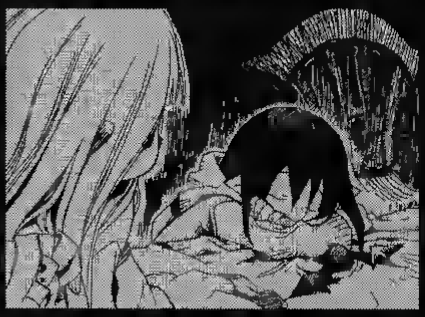
MY FATHER PREPARED THESE COFFINS...
...FOR EVERY-ONE IN TOWN.
I THINK MY COFFIN IS IN THERE TOO.

MM.

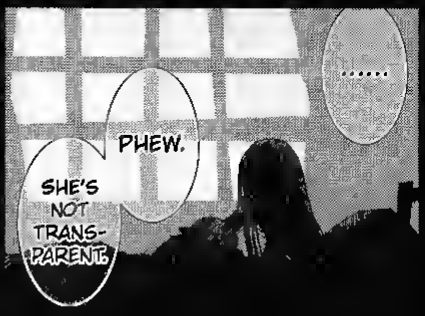
BUT I WONDER WHY WE HAVE TO GO INSIDE A COFFIN AND SLEEP UNDER-GROUND?
I WOULDN'T WANT TO STAY SOMEWHERE SO DARK AND NARROW.
YEAH, BUT...

HUH? NIGHT-TIME?
OH...I MUST VE HAD ANOTHER ATTACK.

EVEN IF THEIR BODIES ARE GONE...
...SENSEI SAID IT'S MORE FOR THE ALIVE PEOPLE THAN THE DEAD.
...IT'S PROOF THAT THEY EXISTED IN THIS WORLD.



I'M NOT GOING TO BE SOME-ONE OF THE PAST YET.
HMPH.
YOU BROUGHT IT UP FIRST.
OW, THAT HURTS!
YANK

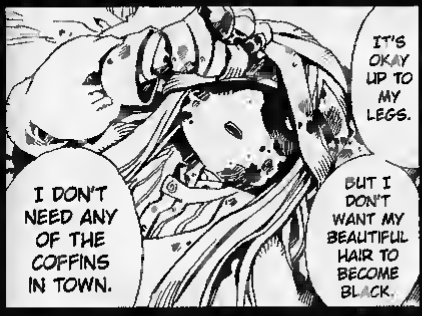

.....
PHEW.
SHE'S NOT TRANS-PARENT.

HEY.
AREN'T YOU LEAVING YET?
THE FIFTH DAY...

"DIO-RAMA?"
A weird place that doesn't seem real.
Come to think of it, this is our first time visiting a town with no one occupying it.
It's like a diorama.

I SEE.
NOT YET.
THEN I'LL TELL YOU BEFORE YOU GO.

You're pretty fixated on Mo.
I WISH I COULD TAKE MO ALONG
IF WE FIND THE WITCH SHE'LL BE OKAY


IT'S OKAY UP TO MY LEGS.
I DON'T NEED ANY OF THE COFFINS IN TOWN.
BUT I DON'T WANT MY BEAUTIFUL HAIR TO BECOME BLACK.

Friend, eh?
OF COURSE. WE'RE BOTH SUFFERING BECAUSE OF THE WITCH
True. Just from circumstances alone, you girls are like sisters.
AND MO IS MY FRIEND.

SO...
...I WANT YOU TO BE MY COFFIN.

.....
THEN THAT MAKES ME THE OLDER SISTER.
I'm sure she feels the same way.
WHAT!? BUT I'M OLDER.

PUT ME INSIDE OF YOU...
...AND DON'T FORGET ABOUT ME.
THEY SAID IT WAS A DISEASE.
SO I THOUGHT IT WAS AN "ATTACK."
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
THE BLACK SPOTS ONLY SHOW UP AT CERTAIN TIMES.
IT'S WHEN...
...MY FEELINGS ARE "BLACK."
ONCE A PART IS BLACK, IT STAYS BLACK.
I STRUGGLE, AND MY ANXIETY INCREASES.
YOU'RE REALLY STUPID.
YOU NEED ME TO TELL YOU EVERYTHING?
IF THE BLACK SPOTS INCREASE AND I TURN ALL BLACK...
...WHAT WILL I TURN OUT TO BE?

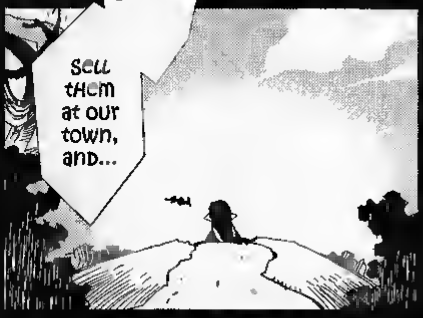
...and the grave becomes the proof of the dead.
The coffin becomes the container...
Something was full but also empty.
The seventh day was weird.
They're going on a journey, yet they need to leave their mark.
It's a lingering explanation.
...We left for our journey again.
Sorry for taking so long.
There you are.
...What the?
.....

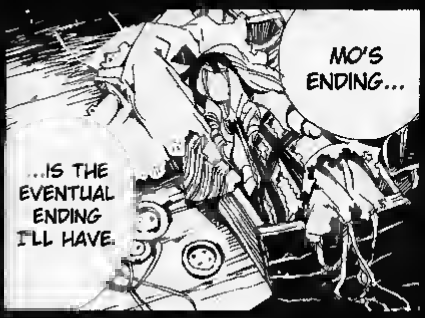
But you're continuing the journey, right?
Okay.
YEAH.

What sick joke is this?
MO'S NOT IN IT.
That coffin...
IT'S EMPTY.

But isn't it a hassle to drag?
And do something about your clothes.
You had my glasses.

SO THIS IS MY COFFIN.
FOR MO AND ME.


Sell them at our town, and...

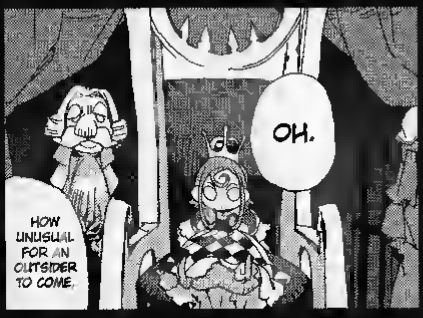

MO'S ENDING...
...IS THE EVENTUAL ENDING I'LL HAVE.

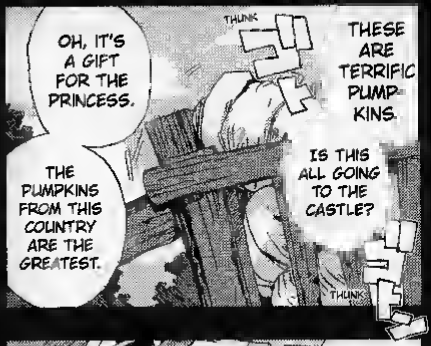
This journey is for us to return to our normal selves.
But don't forget this.

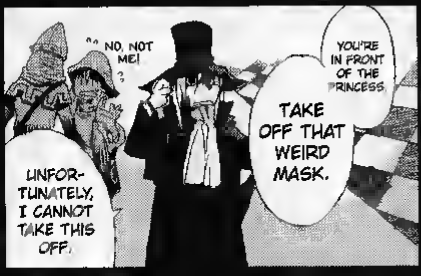
WHEN THE TIME COMES...
...I WANT TO DIE AS MYSELF TOO.

WHAT'S THIS? WHAT ARE YOU DRAWING?
I WANT THAT ROCK!!
NO, BECAUSE YOU USE IT UP TOO FAST.
YOU CHEAP-SKATE!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
I DON'T KNOW.
I WONDER WHY?
BUT SHE LOOKS FAMILIAR.
NO, SOMEONE DIFFER-ENT.
WHAT? YOUR GUARDIAN IS BACK?
HUH?
HUH?
KURO-CHAN IS FINALLY BACK!
OH!
NIJUKU, SANJU.

I'M SICK OF HEARING ABOUT PRINCESSES IN OTHER COUNTRIES.
ISN'T THERE A STORY FEATURING ME!?
...IS WHAT SHE SAID.
ONE NIGHT THE MAID WAS TRYING TO PUT HER TO SLEEP, WHEN...
THIS IS A STORY THAT TAKES PLACE IN A CASTLE IN A LAND FAR AWAY.
IT'S ABOUT A YOUNG, SELFISH PRINCESS.
SO THE KING MADE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE WHOLE COUNTRY.
"I WILL REWARD THE ONE WHO COMES UP WITH THE STORY THAT PLEASES THE PRINCESS."
NOW IF YOU THOUGHT, "WHAT A STUPID STORY..."
...I SUGGEST YOU LEAVE THIS COUNTRY QUICKLY.
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR HEAD.
CHOP


OH.
HOW UNUSUAL FOR AN OUTSIDER TO COME.


THUNK
THESE ARE TERRIFIC PUMPKINS.
OH, IT'S A GIFT FOR THE PRINCESS.
IS THIS ALL GOING TO THE CASTLE?
THE PUMPKINS FROM THIS COUNTRY ARE THE GREATEST.
THUNK


NO, NOT ME!
YOU'RE IN FRONT OF THE PRINCESS.
TAKE OFF THAT WEIRD MASK.
UNFORTUNATELY, I CANNOT TAKE THIS OFF.

EVER SINCE THAT ANNOUNCEMENT, MANY POETS AND THOSE SEEKING THE REWARD CAME TO OUR COUNTRY.
WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVE? THE REWARD? OR THE FAME?
BUT NOT ONE HAS SATISFIED THE PRINCESS.

IT'S OKAY.
I'M HAPPY AS LONG AS I CAN HEAR AN INTERESTING TALE.
CHOP

I'M JUST HERE BECAUSE I'M CURIOUS.
I WANT TO SEE THE SELFISH PRINCESS AND HER CASTLE.

.....
DON'T MIND THAT.
I JUST HAD A VISITOR.

I'LL SAY THIS. THE KING WAS A WONDERFUL PERSON.
EXCEPT FOR ONE FLAW.
THAT HE SPOILED HIS DAUGHTER?

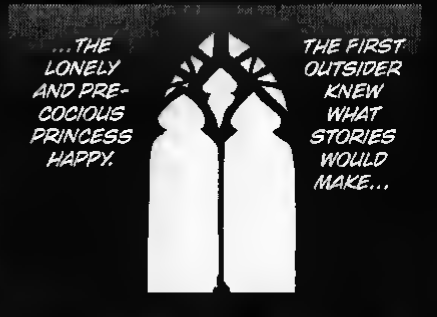
THE PRINCESS WAS VERY SATISFIED.
SHE SAYS SHE WILL GIVE YOU A SPECIAL REWARD FOR YOUR TALE.

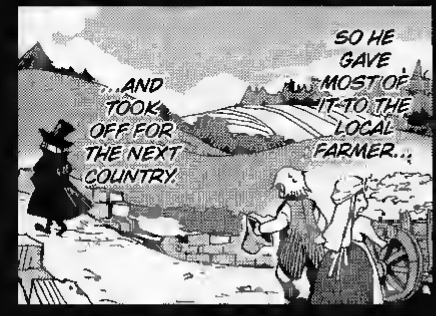
WHAT A TROUBLE-SOME PRINCESS.
THE FIRST OUTSIDER SAID THIS.

...WAS A MOUNTAIN OF GOLD IN THE CASTLE STORAGE.
AND THE REWARD...

I'LL DO SOME-THING.
I'M GOOD AT MAKING UP STORIES
YOU'RE SO EASY-GOING.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

HUH?
I CAN'T HANDLE THIS MUCH MONEY.
IT'S TOO HEAVY AND I WON'T BE ABLE TO TRAVEL.
BUT THE OUTSIDER WAS AT A LOSS.


...THE LONELY AND PRE-COCIOUS PRINCESS HAPPY.
THE FIRST OUTSIDER KNEW WHAT STORIES WOULD MAKE...

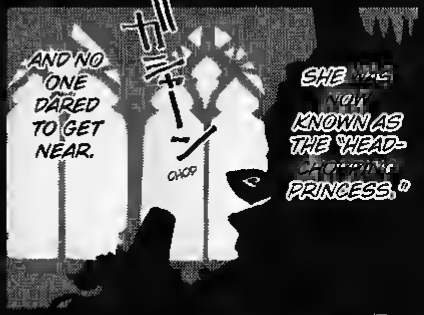

...AND TOOK OFF FOR THE NEXT COUNTRY.
SO HE GAVE MOST OF IT TO THE LOCAL FARMER...

...WAS A LOVE STORY WITH MANY DREAMS AND HOPES.
THE TALE HE TOLD...

WHAT A TROUBLE-SOME PRINCESS.
THAT IS WHAT THE SECOND OUTSIDER SAID.

BUT THE CASTLE DID NOT CHANGE AT ALL.
TIME PASSED AND THE SMALL PRINCESS REACHED A CERTAIN AGE.

AND HE TOOK OUT HIS INSTRU-MENT...
...AND STARTED TO TELL A TALE.


AND NO ONE DARED TO GET NEAR.
SHE WAS NOW KNOWN AS THE "HEAD-CHOPPING PRINCESS."
CHOP

...A BORED LADY SATISFIED.
HE KNEW WHAT KIND OF STORY WOULD MAKE...

I WANT TO HEAR MORE OF THE TALE.
BUT THERE IS NO ONE IN THIS COUNTRY WHO CAN GIVE IT TO ME.
THEN THE SOLUTION IS TO CATCH THE TRAVELERS WHO COME INTO THIS COUNTRY.

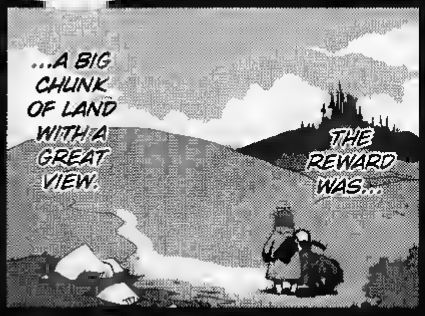
...WAS AN ADVEN-TUROUS AND MYS-TERIOUS ONE.
THE TALE HE TOLD...

SO DO YOU UNDER-STAND THE POSITION YOU'RE IN?
SHIIIING
ALL TOO WELL.

CHOP
...THERE WAS ANOTHER OUTSIDER WHO CAME INTO THE CASTLE.
AND ONE DAY, AFTER A FEW MONTHS HAD PASSED...

THE PRINCESS WAS VERY SATISFIED.
SHE SAID SHE WILL GIVE YOU A HANDSOME REWARD FOR THE TALE

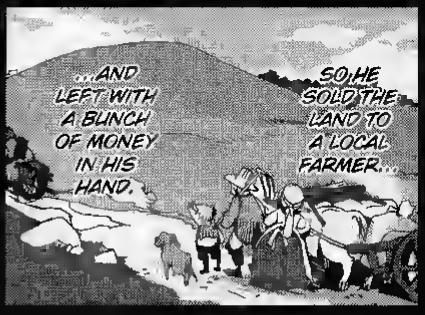
OH, THAT. IT COMES NEAR, BUT DON'T WORRY.
JUST SCARE IT A BIT, AND IT GOES AWAY.
THERE'S A LARGE BIRD FLYING OVER THERE


...A BIG CHUNK OF LAND WITH A GREAT VIEW.
THE REWARD WAS...

...THEY'RE THE ONES WHO SHOT PUMPKINS AT ME USING A CANNON!
THAT CASTLE WITH THE POINTY ROOFS...
VROOOM

THERE'S NO POINT IN HAVING LAND. I'M A TRAVELER
WHAT IS SHE THINK-ING?
BUT THE OUT-SIDER WAS AT A LOSS.

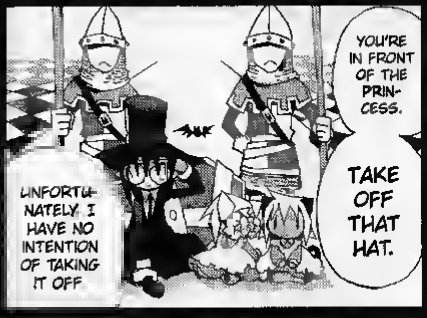
...FLEW AWAY SO SHE WOULDN'T GET INVOLVED.
SO THE TRAVEL-'ING AIR DELIVERY SERVICE...

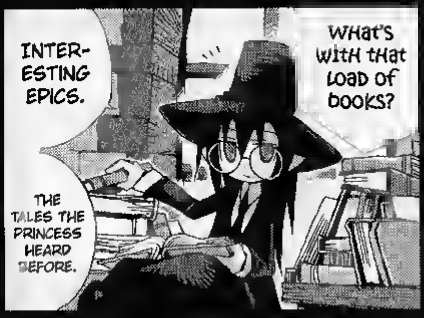

...AND LEFT WITH A BUNCH OF MONEY IN HIS HAND.
SO HE SOLD THE LAND TO A LOCAL FARMER...

THE KING WHO PASSED AWAY A FEW YEARS AGO...
...WAS A GREAT MAN RESPECTED BY HIS MEN AND THE PEOPLE.
THERE ARE MANY FIELDS HERE.
I can't believe a country could be run by a princess like that.

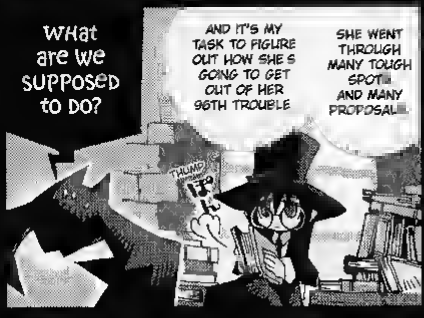
...A THIRD OUTSIDER WAS SUMMONED TO THE CASTLE.
...WHY YOU'RE HERE.
I'M SURE YOU KNOW...
AT THE SAME TIME...
WELL, SORT OF.

THE FOOD WAS GOOD.
LOTS OF PUMPKIN.
THAT'S GOOD.
YOUR LAST SUPPER WAS DELICIOUS.


YOU'RE IN FRONT OF THE PRINCESS.
TAKE OFF THAT HAT.
UNFORTUNATELY, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF TAKING IT OFF.


INTERESTING EPICS.
WHAT'S WITH THAT LOAD OF BOOKS?
THE TALES THE PRINCESS HEARD BEFORE.

IT'S OKAY
I'M SATISFIED AS LONG AS I HEAR AN INTERESTING TALE.
EVEN IF IT IS A BORING TALE...


WHAT are we supposed to do?
AND IT'S MY TASK TO FIGURE OUT HOW SHE'S GOING TO GET OUT OF HER 96TH TROUBLE
SHE WENT THROUGH MANY TOUGH SPOTS AND MANY PROPOSALS.
THUMP

.....
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR HEAD AND HAT SEPARATING.
CHOP
BE ASSURED.

THAT IS WHAT HER PRINCE SAID BEFORE RIDING OFF ON HIS WHITE HORSE.
"WAIT FOR ME. I'LL COME BACK AND GET YOU."
MOST OF THE SCENARIOS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED. THERE'S NOTHING ELSE.
DAMN IT!
I DON'T KNOW WHO IT WAS, BUT HE PUT US IN A TOUGH SPOT.
A WITCH WHO ENVIED HER BEAUTY PLOTTED WITH THE DARK KING AND PUT A CURSE ON THE PRINCESS.
WHILE THE PRINCESS WAITED, SHE WENT THROUGH MANY ADVENTURES.
WHAT'S THE STORY?
WHAT KIND OF STORY?
"WATCH OUT!" THE PRINCESS ATTACKED IN THE DARKNESS WHEN...
AND EVEN THE PRINCE SHE FINALLY REUNITED WITH WAS A PAWN OF THE WITCH.
I WANT TO HEAR.
CAN YOU READ TO US?
...AND STARTED TO EAT IT.
...SHE BROKE THE MONSTER'S BODY INTO PIECES...
.....
THAT'S TRUE.
THEN HERE'S THE ABRIDGED VERSION

And we ch[illegible] the most interesting one
ARE YOU TRYING TO UPSET THE PRINCESS!?
I'VE NEVER HEARD SUCH A STUPID STORY!
SHE USED THE LEFTOVER PIECES TO DRAW A SUN.
...THEN THE SKY TURNED WARM AND A CAT FLEW IN.
BUT NO MATTER HOW FANCY WE MAKE THE SETTING
...IT WILL BE THE SAME IF THE CHARACTER IS THE [illegible]
WE WERE TOLD TO MAKE A TALE FEATURING THE PRINCESS
THE WITCH, PRINCE, KURO-CHAN, AND THE PROFESSOR CAME...
...AND EVERYONE WAS HAPPY. THEY ALL SANG A SONG.
THAT'S THE ONLY STORY I COULD COME UP WITH
...AND CHOPPED OFF HEADS WHEN THINGS DIDN'T GO HER WAY.
THAT'S WHY SHE USED HER MEN AS SHE PLEASED...
YES.
ROUND, ROUND. IT MAKES MY TUMMY FULL.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THESE KIDS ARE SAYING
TRANSLATE
TRAVELER,
ARREST THESE PEOPLE!!
In my ending it was all a dream.
My story was better than yours.
They were awed by the royal dinner they had last night.
I THINK THEY'RE SINGING A SONG ABOUT PUMPKINS.
まんまるぼ
SFX PUMPKINS, ROUND PUMPKINS

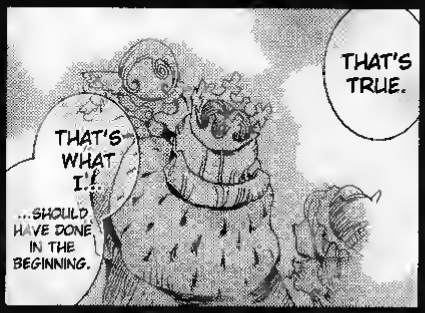
...TO MAKE ME REALIZE THAT WITH YOUR STUPID STORY, RIGHT?
TRAV-ELER.
IT WAS YOUR PLAN...
NO WAY.
STUPID?

...A VOICE WAS HEARD.
STOP.
THAT'S WHEN...

...AND THEY ASKED FOR MORE.
SO I TOLD THEM...
THE TWO REALLY LIKED YOUR TALE...

...WITH THE REST AS THEY PLEASED.
...THAT THEY COULD COME UP...

YOUR REAC-TION IS PROO...
...THAT YOU GUYS FELT THE SAME WAY.
IT'S OKAY.
PRIN-CESS...

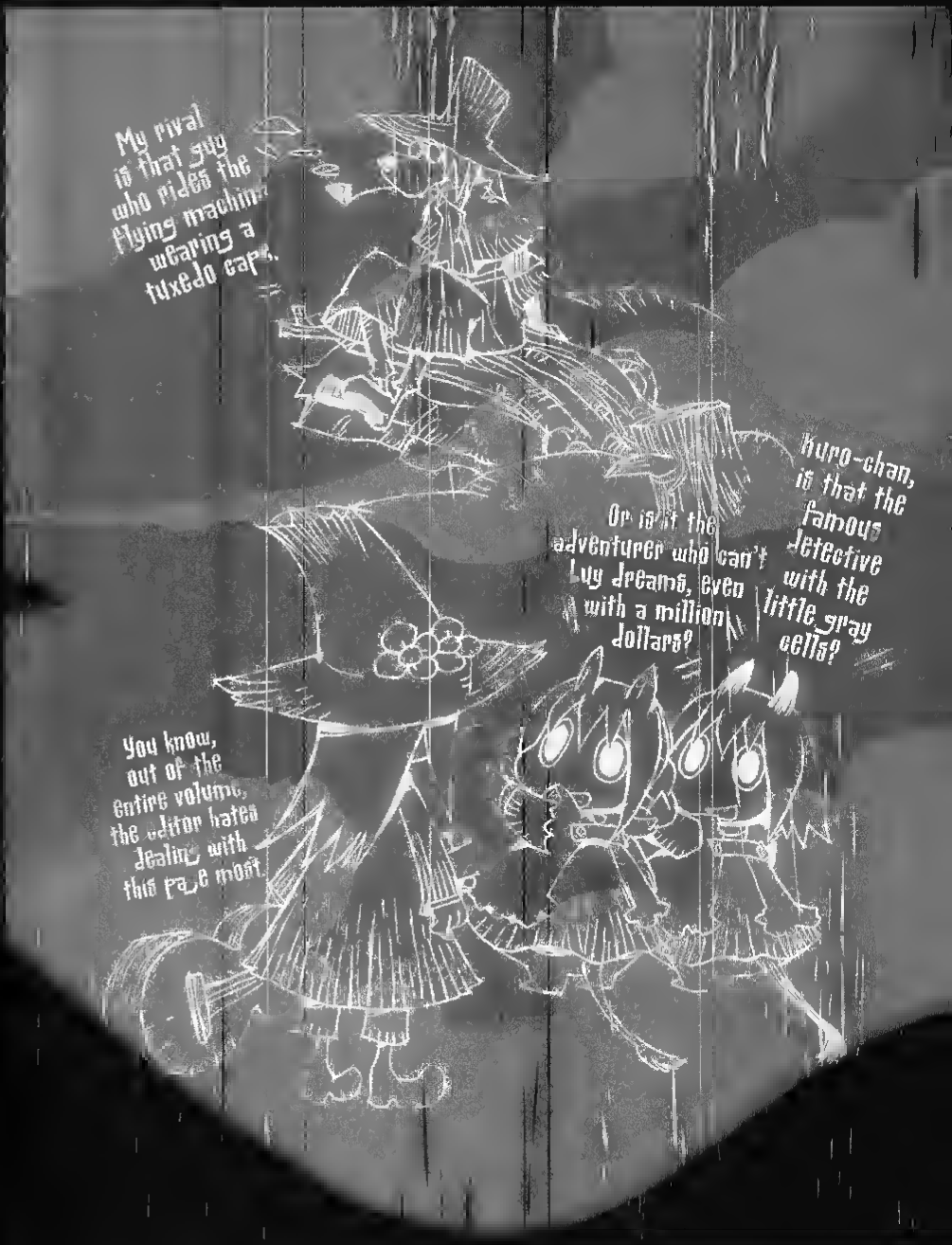

THAT'S WHAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE IN THE BEGINNING.
THAT'S TRUE.

YOU GUESSED WELL, SEN.
I GUESS.
GOOD
I AM NOW AWAKE FROM MY BLIND-NESS.
I THINK THE RAT WAS THE MOST TRUTH-FUL.

THE BIG "SECRET" OF THE GUIL-LOTINE.
AND THAT IS WHEN HER MEN BOWED AND CON-FESSED.
BUT...
THE THIRD OUTSIDER RECEIVED NOTHING AND GAVE NOTHING.
NOW...
...IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO TO THE GUILLOTINE.
...SHE SAID THIS AND AND SMILED.
WELL, THEN...
IT WAS REALLY A STUPID STORY, AFTER ALL
WHEN THE PRINCESS HEARD THAT...
PLEASE DON'T, YOUR HIGH-NESS.
IT'S ENOUGH TO ACKNOWL-EDGE THE MIST AKES YOU MADE.
YOU JUST NEED TO START OVER FROM HERE
THAT'S ANOTHER TALE.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT BECAME OF THE PRINCESS.
I NEED TO BE PUNISHED FOR THAT.
BUT I'VE DONE BAD THINGS TO THIS COUNTRY AND THE ROYAL FAMILY.
...FOODS MADE WITH PUMPKIN DISAPPEARED FROM THE ROYAL DIN-NER TABLE.
BUT EVER SINCE THE GUILLOTINE WENT OUT OF USE...
FROM THE TIME THE KING PASSED AWAY...
...WE'VE BEEN KEEPING A BIG SECRET
THEN WE NEED TO BE PUNISHED TOO.

THANK YOU FOR READING *SHOULDER-A-COFFIN KURO* VOLUME 2.
I'LL BE HAPPY IF I CAN SEE YOU IN THE NEXT VOLUME TOO

SATOKO KIYUDUKI


My rival is that guy who rides the flying machine wearing a tuxedo cape.
Or is it the adventurer who can't buy dreams, even with a million dollars?
Kuro-chan, is that the famous detective with the little gray cells?
You know, out of the entire volume, the editor hates dealing with this page most.

Shoulder-a-Coffin Kuro, Satoko Kiyuduki